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## ON HUMAN FREEDOM

*On Human Freedom* comprises the Forwood Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, six in all, given in the University of Liverpool in 1945. In the author's opinion there are three primary conceptions of human freedom, viz., non-coercion, autonomy and indeterminism. He attempts to define, compare, distinguish and correlate these, not merely with regard to the freedom of the human will, but also and more generally with regard to freedom in human life and thought. The discussion is in the main psychological and ethical. In the last lecture it is theological.

*by JOHN LAIRD*

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# ON HUMAN FREEDOM

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Being the Forwood Lectures  
on the Philosophy of Religion

given in the University of Liverpool  
in November, 1945

BY

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## PREFACE

JOHN LAIRD did not live to see the proofs of this book.

He might have made some small changes. There was one matter, plurality of causes, on which he dictated the note which appears on page 105.

He would have liked Professor and Mrs. Alan Dorward to know how happy they made him as their guest in Liverpool while he was giving the Forwood lectures.

My own heartfelt thanks go to Professor and Mrs. C. Alec Mace who offered to do the proof reading and who took great trouble to find the few mistakes that had escaped the printers.

H. R. L.

analysis is very severe indeed. Men torture themselves with the idea that they are the slaves of fate, or of Thomas Hardy's "It", and conclude, despite the plainest evidence to the contrary, that they really are "slaves" in the same sense as drug addicts or as black Sambo in Virginia a hundred years ago,—as it happens two quite different types of "slavery".

In the present set of lectures, as befits one who has undertaken to discourse upon topics which have a bearing upon the philosophy of religion, I shall usually be dealing with problems about human freedom which make little difference, one way or the other, in, let us say, a political context, and consequently are seldom discussed in such a context. It does not follow, however, that these problems are remote from common life and either a luxury for idle speculation, or a kind of madness that descends upon certain unfortunate people who fever themselves over matters appropriate to the remote coolness of mere intellectual curiosity. On the contrary, it seems to me to be quite as important to know what you are discussing, what your assertions imply, and what they do not imply, in ethics and in theology as, say, in politics where it would be difficult to think highly of sweeping assertions about the "road to serfdom" without the accompaniment of elaborate discussions into the meaning of serfdom, the extent to which the alleged serfs had no freedom, the possibility of showing clearly who were the masters and who the serfs or, if the masters are a committee of the majority of the serfs, what precisely happens about the serfdom of any single serf or of any group of them. Such problems may be perplexing and may also be tedious. But if they are ignored the result is little better than muddling diatribe.

Enough of preamble, however. Let us consider the conception of freedom.

The primary conception of freedom is a simple negative,

the absence of such and such a restriction. A man is care-free if he has no cares. An article is duty-free if there is no duty to pay. True, we should not usually trouble to say that A was *x*-free unless it could be supposed that A might have been *x*-hindered. Even poets seldom describe granite as carefree, because nobody supposes that granite has any worries. There is a tendency therefore to interpret freedom as something more than mere absence perhaps even to interpret it as actual riddance. That, however, is strictly speaking unnecessary ; and although the context in which we employ the negative term " freedom " commonly presupposes certain positive ideas about the being which is said to be free in this or the other respect, these positive assumptions are not part of the meaning of the term. Set a thrush free from your strawberry nets and he will fly away. Set a hedgehog free from the same nets and he will shuffle away. Neither flying nor shuffling is part of the meaning of freedom as such. They describe simply what the thrush or the hedgehog is expected to do if liberated.

These elementary remarks have an elementary point. Contemporary political writers, for instance, frequently assert that freedom and power are identical. Plainly, however, there are important senses in which it is not so. Slaves exercise their powers under threat of the lash, but not freely in many significant senses of freedom, even if their action be " voluntary " in the sense that they prefer toil to a drubbing. On the whole, there are no advantages and there are very serious disadvantages in attempting to define freedom as more than negative, in overlaying the negative with positive assumptions about what such and such a being would do if free to do it. He might do the same thing, exercise the same powers, if he were not free to do anything else. The thing may happen with a conscript as well as with a volunteer.

At this point, I am sorry to say, certain philosophers intervene and assert that, as well as the negative " freedom-from " there is also the positive " freedom-to ". " Every kind [of freedom] ", Collingwood declared, " has a positive aspect and a negative aspect. Positively it is freedom to do something of a special kind. Negatively it is freedom from a special kind of compulsion. If anyone uses the word ' freedom ' to me I expect him to answer the question ' Freedom to do what ? ' ' Freedom from what ? ' Not to parade the answers all the time, because that would be boring ; but to have them up his sleeve if they are wanted. Failing this either the freedom of which he speaks means nothing ; or at any rate he does not know what it means." <sup>1</sup>

The word " aspect " is pretty vague, and I have allowed that, in any given context, we usually make fairly positive assumptions about what a man, a thrush or a hedgehog would do if free at the material time in a material situation. I should also be prepared to allow that if anyone denies the existence of freedom in such and such a context he may reasonably be asked to explain with precision how it is barred. This might involve a detailed account of the " special kind of compulsion " which shuts it out, and in many human affairs, especially of the political, ethical and theological order, disputants would be prudent to have a clear idea of this " special kind of compulsion " up their sleeves and even peeping out of their cuffs. Useful argumentative precautions, however, should not be confused with the very meaning of the terms employed, and if Collingwood's contention be that the very meaning of freedom is in part positive (i.e. " freedom-to ") and in part negative (i.e. " freedom-from ") I cannot agree with him. To say that you are free to do this or that, I submit, is simply to say that you are not prevented from doing it.

<sup>1</sup> *The New Leviathan*, 13, 23 and 13, 24.

*Nihil obstat* is the whole of the meaning, and is wholly negative.

Similar comments should be made upon Kant's fundamental contention in his *Critique of Practical Reason* that although the primary meaning (*erster Begriff*) of freedom is negative, nevertheless, in all moral matters, freedom and the moral law reciprocally imply one another.<sup>1</sup> In detail Kant's argument was that every moral action was voluntary, that voluntary action must be determined either by reason or by inclination, these opposites being exclusive and exhaustive, with the consequence that if a voluntary action be inclination-free it must be determined by reason, that is to say determined by moral principle. Given the premises the conclusion would follow, whatever subsequent perplexities might flow from it (and there were many such as all Kantians know). But all Kant's premises were disputable. Many moralists would deny that morality need always be a matter of will. Most psychologists would deny that the alternatives reason and inclination are exhaustive ; and nearly everyone, plain man, psychologist or moralist would deny that reason and inclination are exclusive. Almost unanimously they would repudiate Kant's contention that every spark of loving-kindness or fellow-feeling destroys its proportion of the morality of the motive. In short, the alleged reciprocal determination of the negative, freedom, and the positive, the moral law, so far from stating a direct equivalence merely describes the two ends of a chain whose links are open or broken. In morality there is no easy passage from the bare negative, freedom, to anything positive.

If this excursion into Kantian ethics were merely a remark about Kant it could reasonably be censured for loitering without visible excuse. I have made it because it seems to me to be a good illustration of something much

<sup>1</sup> *Analytic of the Pure Practical Reason*, § VI, Problem 2, Remark.

more general. Wherever there are two and only two exclusive alternatives there, if one be absent, the other must be present. In such cases, but only in such cases, the negative uniquely determines the positive, and it is legitimate to proceed forthwith from the absent, the negative, to the present, the positive. The difficulty always is to prove conclusively that there are just two exclusive alternatives, one of which must be present. Indeed the thing can very seldom be done, and in all the contexts in which we usually speak about freedom it is as good as certain that there is a wide field of possibilities, not all of them exclusive, indeed that more than two possibilities can readily be contemplated by quite unstable persons. Hence, as Collingwood said, the question "Freedom from what? In what sense and in what respect?" is nearly always salutary. It is also salutary to have clear ideas about what, positively, is to be expected if freedom, that negative, can be established. Such expectations, however, are no part of the meaning of freedom, and are often hazardous. It is but healthy to pay close attention to the risks one is taking and to the assumptions one overlooks so easily.

There is little to be said about negative terms except simply that they *are* negative, unless, indeed, one enters upon a discussion of the philosophy of denial. That, on the present occasion, would be a piece of insufferable pedantry. Consequently I have nothing more to say directly about freedom in its *erster Begriff*, its primary sense of *Nihil obstat*.

On the other hand, as I hope has been made sufficiently plain, the actual use of any negative term is adapted to its context, and some general remarks under this head would seem to be appropriate at the present stage of our discussion. Later, and in particular contexts, I shall have to go into this matter in much greater detail but am not,

on that account, excused from the duty of offering, here and now, a general sketch of this aspect of the situation.

In the case of mankind, *Nihil obstat* means that there is nothing to prevent such and such a course of action, and consequently that an agent is free to pursue the said course of action. We may therefore ask, firstly, whether the simple words "nothing to prevent" either display or conceal any assumptions of moment.

As used by a censor the words plainly imply that an official of a governing body grants a permission which he could withhold. The context has to do with the wills of men, and, what is more, with the wills of governing men. That in general is the appropriate context in all political discussions about freedom, and in many ethical and theological discussions. From the nature of the case it will be presupposed in much of our subsequent discussion ; but special implications of this order should be distinguished from the more general meaning of the terms employed.

I should like to say that freedom in general means natural licence, that political freedom means political licence ; and so on. If I said these things I should, I think, be speaking intelligibly but should also have to offer certain cautionary explanations in order to avoid misunderstanding. There is metaphor in the statement that Nature permits, or grants its licence, and there may be a suspicion of metaphor in the statement that Nature prevents. At any rate it would be odd to say, for example, that Nature permits hens to fly across low hedges but prevents them from making the extensive flights of carrier pigeons. Indeed, even in a political context, there may be need for somewhat similar cautionary reservations. Governing bodies do permit and they do prevent. It might be maintained, however, that even a man's political liberty is not primarily just what the government allows him but, on the contrary, is primarily or "naturally"

inherent in him, something that the government should respect on its merits not simply or primarily something which the government bestows.

With these explanations it may be permissible to say that liberty is licence either natural or artificial. In any case the distinction so put clears a space for manœuvre.

Natural licence, then, connotes the absence of insurmountable obstacles. Does it, in addition, connote the absence of all obstacles? If we said that it did, we should have to meet the immediate and specious objection that many obstacles are a stimulus as well as a challenge to some given activity or, again, are included among the conditions of many activities. What would mountaineering be without its exciting obstacles? What, for that matter, would a sack-race be without its impeding sacks? If, on the other hand, we said that natural licence did not connote the absence of all obstacles but only the absence of insurmountable obstacles, we should have to face the paradox involved in the assertion that obstacles very nearly but not quite insurmountable do not restrict anyone's freedom and, in general, that there is no opposition between freedom and the hindrances to it. The last of these propositions, if accepted, would make nonsense of most historical fights for freedom. The most galling oppression is seldom absolute in the sense required. On the whole I think we should say that every obstacle is so far a restriction of freedom although some obstacles may very well spur us on to greater and to enjoyably successful efforts.

The illustration of the hens and the carrier pigeons referred to freedom of movement in beings which, if free, are able to move. Is there any significant difference when we consider the natural licence, not of the movements of potential movers, but more generally in Bergson's way, the natural licence in growth and development of every kind, in cabbages as well as in pigeons, in human

character as well as in human muscles. Here, pretty clearly, there are assumptions very slightly concealed, not necessarily of a different order from the rest but perhaps easier to discern. Growth or development may certainly be impeded. It may be starved or stunted ; but if it is starved the meaning is that there is insufficient nourishment available for it, and if it is stunted what usually happens is not that growth ceases but that it is redirected. In short a growing thing is always a partner in a transaction, the transaction of using its environment. It is " free " *id est*, it is not impeded in this transaction if the environment is propitious. What does " propitious " mean here ? The underlying assumption must be that every developing thing tends towards a certain optimum, characteristic of its own proper integrity, and is " free " in its growth in so far as it uses its environment in a way that favours its development towards its proper optimum. That is clear in the case of physical growth, and it is important, if not always quite so clear, in the growth of mind and character. But how would a mind grow without facts to observe and record, without friends to teach and to stimulate it ? Little if any human freedom is the freedom of something wholly self-contained, and if it is the freedom of a user in a transaction, there must be the used as well as the user.

As has been said, most discussions of human freedom in connection with moral, political or theological matters refer primarily, or at any rate ostensibly, to human willing, to the willed actions of men and women. Even if some willed actions are wholly self-enclosed, most are not, but are transactions with a physical, a mental or a social environment. For rather obvious reasons, therefore, many philosophers are disposed to assert that the place of will, choice or decision is relatively superficial (if not wholly a sham) and that deeper investigation aligns human action

with sub-volitional development, if not merely biological as in the case of cabbages, at any rate sub- or un-conscious.

I merely mention these matters here, postponing fuller discussion. When the context has to do with willed action, including command and obedience, it is assumed that there is choice between actual powers, between possible movements of thought or of limbs which are, as we say, under the agent's voluntary control. Unless by inadvertence it could scarcely be maintained that the agent's will, his voluntary choice, is the *sole* cause of what he effects in these instances, but it might be said, as very often it is said, that his choice is the primary determining part-cause of the chosen action, is just what makes the critical difference.

That again is a question for later discussion. For the time being I should like merely to call attention to certain distinctive features of the situation when the type of freedom discussed is the freedom of what men choose to do when other men do not choose to prevent them. Since it is as "natural" for men to choose as to breathe such licence is not unnatural in every sense of that much-abused adjective, and it need not be artificial in all senses of "artificial". But it has highly distinctive features well worth our attention.

The chief of these features, and the only such feature I shall consider now, concerns what we call "compulsion". This matter is of the utmost significance because in many contexts freedom and the absence of compulsion are taken to mean the same thing. I think that is the meaning in matters of politics. A man is politically free in so far as he is not under government compulsion, is not forced to act in a certain way by the coercive might of a government which claims to have, and in developed political communities substantially does have, the monopoly of serious coercion.

One of the troubles about such alleged "compulsion" is that, although it may profess to be absolute, it seldom is so. You can prevent a man, very nearly absolutely, from many actions, for instance from moving many yards by shutting him up in a dungeon, and chaining his legs ; but although there is such a thing as frog-marching, it is very difficult indeed literally to compel him to perform any positive action of moment such as signing his name or remembering relevant past events in the witness-box. In the vast majority of cases the alleged compulsion is not absolute at all. It is a matter of threats, an artifice of human intimidation. Except perhaps in a few psychopathic subjects it does not abolish the possibility of choice or force a man to choose against his will. What it does is to threaten penalties sufficiently severe, if incurred, to deter from actions which, without the threat, would be likely to be undertaken. You *could* perform the prohibited action and accept the penalty. Some people do ; and many risk the penalty ; but most are dissuaded.

If this were only a peculiarity of certain types of man-willed unfreedom it would be "just one of those things". If, however, as unfortunately is the case, there were a persistent tendency to equate human freedom, quite generally, with the absence of compulsion, to demand everywhere, like Collingwood, what "special kind of compulsion" is in question when freedom is limited, the mischief is very considerable. The opponents of determinism, for instance, very frequently dig a pit for themselves in this matter. If every action is caused, they say, the agent is compelled to perform it, compelled against his will, or at the very least is denied the efficacy of choice, not merely in matters in which he never had any choice, such as jumping over the moon, but also in matters in which he has a choice, such as jumping over a narrow brook. Little could be more perverse, and it should be obvious to anyone

that compulsion, conceived as a threat, is irrelevant to the general question of causal determination. There is no threat against attempting to jump over the moon.

With these attendant reflections upon the fundamental negative sense, namely non-prevention, I shall end the first part of this lecture. In the second part, now beginning, I shall discuss the conception of autonomy, sometimes considered, though not, I think, very accurately considered, to be identical, *tout court*, with freedom.

Autonomy is self-government, giving the law to oneself. This implies the absence of other-government and in that way implies a certain "freedom" in the merely negative sense. On the other hand, there cannot be self-government unless there *is* government; there cannot be autonomy without the presence of the nomic. Therefore, since anarchy or no-government is perfectly possible, it is plain that the negative "not-other-governed" does not commit us to autonomy.

Self-government, properly speaking, is a political notion and need not be one of the happier examples of the intrusion of political ideas into theology and ethics. It implies that such and such a political body is governed from somewhere within itself, though it need not specify where or how, and it denies foreign political control. When, as is usual in ethics, the reference is to individual men and women, these political conceptions apply at the best by analogy only, and there is always the danger that the analogy is strained unduly either of set purpose or, what may be worse, by inadvertence.

In what sense precisely can a man or woman be said to be self-governing? Strictly, government is a relation of command and obedience. The rulers command and the subjects obey, a conception which is not even disturbed in a so-called perfect democracy in which all the citizens severally obey what collectively they command. How

then can a man either obey himself or command himself? Is he self-sundered into ruler and subject? Or what?

Plainly there is serious difficulty in the literal use of such language with respect to individual human beings; and in Kantian ethics, as all the world knows even if it knows nothing else about Kant's ethical doctrines, true morality, the voice of conscience, is said to be a categorical imperative, an unconditional command imposed by the ruling or rational part of a man upon the subject part of him supposed to consist of his inclinations, his passions and desires. The language and part of the thought is obviously derived from the denial that our duty is God's "Thou shalt". Instead, our duty is said to be *our own* "Thou shalt" whether or not it is further suggested, as in Kant's *Opus Posthumum*, that our own "Thou shalt" is not only the God within us but also, very possibly, all the God there is.<sup>1</sup> The transition may or may not be justifiable, but the use of political language, appropriate to a ruling God, does not seem to be appropriate to an individual man supposed to be promulgating a law to himself.

In place, therefore, of the literal use of such expressions we should have to say, like Bishop Butler, that there is a sufficient analogy, a sane and normal man being a self-regulating, self-controlling being, like an unmanufactured watch, his reason (or perhaps his conscience) being the main self-regulator and a regulator having authority. Such autonomy, it may be admitted, frequently describes rather what a man ought to be than what he is. Still, as a mere description of fact, it has genuine application. Rational self-control is presupposed in any man who is in his right mind; and most people at many times *are* in their right minds. The question of authority may be more difficult, and if the authority of conscience be supreme it may well be doubted whether *such* authority attaches, *de*

<sup>1</sup> See Adicke's *Kant Studien*, Ergänzungsheft, 50, pp. 824 and 829.

*jure*, to mere self-control. Difficulties of this order, however, would not prove that the analogy with political rule and political obedience is either worthless, or suspect through and through.

These very generous concessions being granted, however, it is still abundantly clear that if individual freedom meant *this* type of autonomy, this very elaborate and highly specialised pattern of self-government, the existence of human freedom would have to be denied in a host of cases in which it is our habit to assert it. A man would be free in the relevant sense only when this elaborate hierarchy of his self-government functioned completely *de jure*. That, for example, was what Kant often said. According to him, a man was free only when his action was determined by his pure practical reason. On the assumption, almost certainly false, that pure practical reason was identical with the moral law, this meant that human action was free only when in addition to being in accordance with a conscience that did not err it was completely *actuated* by the said unerring rational conscience. In short there would be freedom, when and only when the man's practical principles were also his practising principles. It is impossible to reconcile this view with the common opinion which Kant, despite the inconsistency, repeatedly asserted just as the plain man would, the opinion, namely, that men are free to sin, free to give passion its head, free to be moral rebels. In more technical language, the elective will, the will to choose between doing and not doing cannot possibly be identical with the rational will, if that in its turn means the will which is just the choice and the enacting of the right. For we may choose and enact the wrong.

The inconsistency, of course, does not tell us of itself which of the conflicting doctrines is in error. The plain man might very well be mistaken ; and those of Kant's statements which agree with the common view might be

just a great man's lapses. If, however, we are seriously asked to believe that freedom *means* self-control under the jurisdiction of right reason, it seems clear without further argument that freedom *means* no such thing. The elaborate pattern of rational autonomy so described, granting it to be free from outside domination, is not pure simple freedom, exhausting what freedom is. On the contrary, it is one pattern of conduct, which (in the usual sense of language) may be free, among other patterns and among disturbed patterns of conduct which may also be free (in that usual sense). What is described in this pattern of rational autonomy is a certain organisation of personality supposed to be the best, and, pretty clearly, most in accordance with human dignity. If "free", it is much more than simple freedom, and it illustrates the need for the warning conveyed with quite sufficient iteration in the first part of this lecture. When attempts are made to regard freedom as something positive, something positive in itself, not merely as a derivative of positive assumptions made in this or in the other context, the attempt is hazardous in the extreme. Your unearned increments have a way of turning into obnoxious liabilities.

Hence, although the matter has its own importance, there is insufficient reason, here and now, for asking whether that particular pattern of rational self-government deserves all the authority and all the prestige that Kant, Butler and others ascribed to it. Critics might say that it is frigid, harsh, repressive, stilted and empty. In its place they might acclaim what they believe to be a richer as well as a more liberal organisation of human personality. Whether correct in this, or mistaken, they would at least have a case ; but they would not have an easier task than the Kantians if they tried to show that the pattern which they preferred to Kant's defined quite precisely what freedom meant, neither more nor less.

In a general discussion of the alleged equivalence between freedom and autonomy, however, it has to be remembered that various types of autonomy may be claimed both in the human species and beyond it. In mankind there are special reasons for according a very high place to what is called rational self-direction and self-control. A man in his right mind is presumed to have a fairly clear head, and clear-headedness may obviously be effective. "Discourse of reason" is the main factor in the palpable distinction between the range of human achievement and that of any other planetary species. In short, if one considers what is distinctive of man, it is hard to give a better answer than the old one that man is a rather rational animal. Even in man's case, however, there are other patterns of organisation, regulation and control. There are emotional patterns, appetitive patterns, vital patterns. It is absurd to present the alternatives, "Either reason or chaos", as if they were exclusive, however true it may be that a man who had no traces of logic in his composition would be altogether sub-human. And why should autonomy be confined to the human species?

For the ancients there was no such restriction. Their speculations on the subject started from what they believed to be the self-moving, an animal conception which they applied far beyond zoology. To-day, although the smallish band of biologists who plead for the autonomy of biology need not claim more than the liberty to treat the behaviour of living things as something quite distinctive, and its principles as irreducible to those of any other science, some of them would assert that living organisms are autonomous in a further sense, being self-regulating and self-perpetuating.

As we saw in the first part of this lecture such autonomy, such self-regulation, is not self-enclosed. No organism is able to nourish itself indefinitely, or to live without nourish-

ment. Its existence requires continuous transactions with its environment, and its continuous use of what is favourable in the environment. It does not follow, however, that in such transactions the user does not have a certain intelligible priority over the used. On the contrary the transaction is teleological in the sense that the user's pattern of growth and development is the prime feature of the picture. In this sense, autonomy or self-regulation has a somewhat perplexing meaning, but a meaning which is neither unintelligible nor uninterrogable. It is "free" in so far as it is self-regulating, not other-regulated, a user, not something which is used.

Unfortunately the legacy of this ancient doctrine of self-movement in the movement of animals, and of the divine stars, and in the growth of all living things is a doctrine of absolute spontaneity, sometimes identified with freedom although modern biologists as well as modern astronomers repudiate such absolute spontaneity with a united voice. Freedom so understood is regarded as pure initiative or, again, as literal, unqualified creativeness. It is said to be a "first cause", that is to say, a cause which has effects but is not itself an effect, and frequently as something discontinuous with any antecedent whatsoever. Indeed, quite desperate attempts are made to show that absolute spontaneity is somewhere to be found in every man, if not in his body, then in his mind.

These desperate efforts may sometimes be almost plausible. Superficially, some human decisions may appear to come out of the blue, to have no discoverable antecedents of any moment; but such cases are rare, and antecedents which are difficult to trace need not be absent. As for creativeness, there may be a relative distinction of some consequence between creative and borrowed thinking. The work of imaginative artists is not a mere representation of hearsay and of memories of what the

senses have supplied. It comes out of the artist's head, though not, I should say, out of nothing. But absolute human creativeness may be dismissed as a grandiloquent myth.

So far as I can discover from the hurried improvisations of Brains Trust performers and from other such sources, most people when asked whether they believe in the freedom of the human will, reply promptly and eagerly that they do, and show, almost at once, that what they believe so firmly is the reality of human initiative and personal responsibility. Each of these is an important article of faith, and a theory which denied either, in all relevant senses, would have no claim to credence. Personal initiative, however, the fact of taking the lead, need not imply absolute spontaneity popping up, goodness knows where or how, somewhere within a self. Moral responsibility, again, means primarily that such and such a moral agent, really is the being who lies or tells the truth, keeps faith or breaks it. There is no implication that either he or anything in him is absolutely spontaneous, discontinuous *a parte ante* with everything else in himself and in the world.

These reflections bring me, by a natural transition, to the third and concluding part of the present introductory lecture, to the doctrine, namely that freedom and indeterminism are either identical or indissoluble.

Determinism is the doctrine that every event is caused and, pressed to its limit, the doctrine that every specific detail in every event has a specific cause settling inevitably that it is just what it is and nothing else. Indeterminism is the denial of determinism. He who asserts that there are any uncaused events, even a solitary one, is an indeterminist. In other language he asserts the existence of objective contingency ; and indeterminists may hold not merely that some few events are uncaused but also, and sweepingly, that no events are caused. /

Until quite recently the ancient belief in an extensive measure of objective contingency in the world became increasingly feeble in view of the advance of natural science, which never found itself gravelled for lack of possible causes. To many, indeed, there seemed to be only one reserved area, the human will, and since this particular backwater of objective contingency was defended very largely on grounds of ethics and religion which, as well as being indisputable, were out of line with the methods of the natural sciences it was generally surmised that the backwater would soon be swept into the main current.

To-day the situation has changed. Many modern physicists of deserved repute maintain that determinism, so far from being a necessity of science, is an embarrassment to science, at any rate in the wide domain of microphysics. At the most what natural science requires, they say, is the determinism of masses, of the swarm, not the determinism of the ultra-microscopic constituents of the swarm. Provided there is aggregate regularity, a cautious scientist need not assume anything at all about the causes, if any, of the behaviour of the unobservably tiny constituents. He could not verify such causes in any case ; for verification is a function of what is observable ; and he is at liberty to deny that there is any microphysical causality.

In consonance with such views, determinism, despite the impressive evidence of the prediction of tides and of eclipses, is held to be upon its trial, in many natural regions, with little or no hope of a conclusive verdict. Accordingly, anyone who is minded to assert the objective contingency of human volition may legitimately take heart from the reflection that objective contingency is widely believed to exist in many other departments of Nature, and on grounds quite independent of the arguments usually advanced in favour of the indeterminism of human choice. "It is a remarkable instance of the unity of

thought", says Sir G. P. Thomson in his book on *The Atom*, "that a study apparently so remote from human emotion as atomic physics, should have so much to say on one of the great problems of the soul".<sup>1</sup>

How much it has to say is another question, and the problem is not eased by the persistent habit of many physicists who speak as if indeterminism and free-will were just the same thing, and therefore describe the behaviour of the atom in terms that are far too human. "There is an inherent uncertainty or power of choice in the world", Thomson says, like so many other, "but with this proviso, that the power of choice is exercised in such a way that in the bulk certain average laws are obeyed." Surely, choice and uncertainty are terms that we apply to minds and, strictly, to minds only. Does an atom or its governing nucleus choose, decide, will? As for uncertainty, a technical term in physics since Heisenberg's "principle of uncertainty" became fashionable, since when did atoms doubt?

It is an important question whether or not objective contingency occurs, and I hope to return to it in later lectures. On the other hand, to suppose that objective contingency and "free-will" mean precisely the same thing is, to say the least, very hasty and very odd. Admittedly much of the historical debate about the freedom of the human will has been about the antithesis, real or supposed, between caused or determined human action and man's alleged *liberum arbitrium*; but this circumstance, even upon the face of it, does not imply the identity of the concepts "free will" and "objective contingency". As has been said, there might be objective contingency where there were no traces of will. Again, even if one of the pertinent senses of "free will" were "a choice which is cause-free", that is not the only legitimate sense of the

<sup>1</sup> P. 244.

term. For a caused volition would nevertheless be "free" in several senses of great importance.

These are problems for the sequel. I should like to end the present introductory lecture by making certain general comments upon the relation between indeterminism and the other two conceptions I have discussed in the lecture, to wit, non-prevention and autonomy.

It might be said that non-prevention is permissive and that indeterminism is radically and metaphysically permissive since, among uncaused actions, anything in the world may happen. Merely to say these things, however, is to show that the language of permission and non-prevention tends to be dangerously metaphorical when applied beyond law and government. The same qualifications are necessary as when I ventured to speak about natural licence.

Since indeterminism, however, is the denial of determinism, the attempt may be made to show that determinism is inevitably hostile to any genuine freedom. Here the line of thought seems frequently to be as follows: What is caused is mandatory. It *must* occur. It is necessitated. But what is free is optional. Therefore whatever is free must be cause-free.

In this form of the argument, the same comments are appropriate as in the case of statements about licence and non-prevention. The term "mandatory" is just as much legal and political as the term "permissive".

Certainly we might avoid the use of the term "mandatory". We might say, for instance, "Whatever is caused to be such and such is necessarily determined to be that and nothing else. Hence there can be no choice as to what it shall be. And to *have a choice* is just to be free." In this statement, superficially, there is no mandatory language and although, as we have seen, undetermined events do not necessarily imply the presence of choice, it

may nevertheless seem reasonable to maintain that where there is choice, as in the case of all matters of will, there cannot be determination to one result exclusive of any other.

As soon as we ask, however, why the choice itself should not be determined we are confronted with quite a different situation. We might then consistently maintain that choice does occur and is effective. All we should be denying would be that the choice itself is uncaused, a piece of intruding spontaneity, objectively contingent, a metaphysical Melchizedek without ancestry.

I can see no reply to this new question except the flat assertion, sometimes made, that *such* "choice" would be spurious. That is too intricate a question to be settled summarily, and so, for the time being, I must leave it. In many such statements about "genuine" choice, prejudice and inadvertence are rife, but the reply may have better claims to solidity.

It is easier to deal with the language of necessitation, with the "must" in the case. In far too many discussions the causal "must" is loosely equated with compulsion and this, in its turn, with the experience of being forced against one's will, or, again, of finding volition ineffective in cases in which we expected it to be effective. It is plain that "being caused" does not imply compulsion in this sense, and that if a man's decisions, though caused, were efficacious—as well they might be—he would not be acting against his will.

It remains to consider the relations between autonomy and indeterminism.

Here I may be brief. Autonomy, in any ordinary usage of the term, does not imply indeterminism.

Consider political autonomy. Few, if any, suppose that if a community be self-governing its self-government is uncaused, an intruder into its historical tissues. The

most that could reasonably be maintained would be that once the autonomous government is functioning the dominant causes are immanent. Even so much as that need not be said of the origins of such a government which, as we can all see to-day, may be imitated from abroad or be the result of foreign pressure.

Consider, again, the relative autonomy of a growing herb. Once the seed begins to develop, immanent causes may predominate in the plant's history, but there is no need to suppose that causes are absent from, or only fitfully present in, the entire story ; and the seeds were not uncaused.

Accordingly if the self-government, self-control and self-regulation of individual men and women does entail objective contingency the reason must lie in some quite special feature of this special type of self-government. That is a reflection which leads us back to arguments already presented, and forwards to the fuller development of some of them.

## LECTURE II

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### The Vulgar Conception of the Freedom of the Will

BY a vulgar conception I mean a conception which appears to be used by the *vulgaris*, by common men in common life. When such conceptions are given prominence there is no need to flatter the mob or to insinuate that common sense, somehow or other, is the final court of philosophical appeal. The common man, in the sense of these discussions, is just the man who has had no special philosophical training and does not claim to be an expert in the subject. His ideas need not be pondered seriously unless in cases in which life, although in a rather untechnical way, demands an appreciable measure of expertise from him. That, I think, is just what happens in matters pertaining to freedom. The distinction between freedom and unfreedom in the domain of personal choice and decision has to have a definite and highly significant place in vulgar practice. Mistakes about it may not, indeed, undergo so swift and so ruthless a practical test as mistakes in the management of a boat. But tests there are. If the vulgar is without vulgar gumption in its conceptions of freedom, it will not escape so very lightly.

There is no good reason for holding that common men are deficient in common gumption in their everyday conceptions of freedom of action, and there may be some slight reason for believing that their conceptions have been tested rather more broadly than those of some of the more technical, more sophisticated experts. In particular, the

plain man may be much less liable than many technical experts to the error of excessive simplification in the interests of a tidy theory. Accordingly, in matters concerning human freedom, we have solid reasons for affirming that any philosophical doctrine which diverges radically and finally, not merely superficially, from the conceptions needed for and used in common life is gravely suspect from the start.

The assumption underlying any such statement is that vulgar conceptions of free will tally, in the rough, with vulgar experience, and so that, since freedom of willing, if it exists, must be a vulgar fact, these vulgar conceptions report something widely prevalent in human life. Here, however, there is need for special caution. A vulgar conception, I have said, is a conception which is *used* by the vulgar. I did not say that it was either defined or analysed by the vulgar. On the contrary definition and analysis require precisely the technical skill and training which the *vulgaris* does not have. The plain man, I believe, keeps pretty close to plain facts in his plain experience when he uses the conception of free will, but he may be flustered, exasperated or actually dumb when asked to explain with precision what precisely his conception is.

There is nothing remarkable about that, at any rate nothing more remarkable than the notorious fact that multitudes think and speak quite clearly without, on that account, being expert compilers of dictionaries. Still the situation is delicate for any philosopher who, in effect, professes to be the plain man's mouthpiece and interpreter, analysing the plain man's notions where the plain man is not himself an analyst. That, I fear, is just what I am now trying to be. The obvious objection is, that the self-styled interpreters of common notions frequently describe their own notions, each believing himself, with more honesty than accuracy, to be a very paradigm of

common gumption. I have agreed so often with this type of objection, when brought against other people, that I cannot suppose myself to be immune from it. Still, I can but try.

And so to business.

To act voluntarily and to act "of one's own free will" are commonly and, I think, correctly regarded as synonyms. Our question now is, "What precisely do we report when we make a report in either of these synonymous terms?"

The most general sense of "voluntary" is "that which is performed or inhibited at will". This is the sense in which physiologists say that swallowing is voluntary and digestion is not, that a warning cough may be voluntary but not a tell-tale sneeze. The meaning is that we choose to perform certain actions and having chosen, do perform them. Or we may forbear to perform them; we may inhibit the doing of them. That is voluntary action. Wherever choice doesn't occur or, as in the case of sudden unexpected paralysis, temporary or more permanent, the chosen action doesn't come off, there is no voluntary action. (Corresponding statements should be understood concerning forbearance and inhibition.)

This contrast between voluntary actions and what is not voluntary is a plain contrast within ordinary experience, verifiable by anyone. So long as it is accepted with faithful and resolute innocence there is no doubt about it at all. It is a datum for philosophy, not itself speculative; and it should not be in any danger of being submerged under subsequent waves of philosophy. So I have tried to describe it with scrupulous innocence. I have not even said that a voluntary action is one that we *can* choose and, having chosen, *can* perform. For that very natural statement might not be entirely innocent. If, for example, its meaning were that we were possessed of a reservoir of

power which we could exercise or forbear from exercising without any cause for the doing or for the forbearing, it would not be an innocent statement.

Again, I have not said anything about the way in which we come to be aware of this fundamental practical distinction. Some philosophers would say that we somehow divine the efficacy of our volitions, so that, in substance, the distinction is prior to experience, and a few of them would say that the efficacy so divined is the only genuine efficacy in the world,—that all other so-called “causes” are only shams. That would not be an innocent assertion and I have not made it. Other philosophers say that we simply discover the distinction in repeated experience. We learn by experience, for example, that, normally, when we decide to say “Yes” we do successfully utter the word “Yes”, although when we try to mimic the way in which somebody else utters the word “Yes” we don’t succeed very well unless we are skilful mimics, which skill, in its turn, is itself proved by experience to exist or not to exist. This account of the origin of our knowledge of the distinction seems more innocent than the former. Experience does evince the difference; but experience may not be the only witness, and the doctrine, therefore, may not be wholly innocent. So I have not asserted it.

Certain elementary explanations and additions may save trouble later on.

(a) I described a voluntary action as one that was actually chosen; but the adjective “voluntary”, like other adjectives, is apt to be somewhat grasping, and is sometimes described as the willable rather than as the willed, that is, as the class of actions which, on fairly reasonable assumptions, could be willed. There may be some danger of ambiguity here; but, usually, it is slight.

(b) As I have said, “actions” may be mental as well as physical. Counsel’s “Try to remember” is an

injunction to the witness's will just as clearly as a mother's "Try not to fidget" is an injunction to the will of her child. The truth of this is not affected by the circumstance that many (perhaps most) memories come unbidden and that some fidgets are non-voluntary.

(c) What is voluntary may vary from man to man, and may vary within each man at different times of his life. For me to sign my name now is a voluntary action. It was not a voluntary action for me during my illiterate infancy. Again I may be too tired, or too dazed, or too dosed to sign anything. If so the action of signing is non-voluntary for the time being in my case.

(d) When we speak of doing this or that "at will" we usually think of actions which are performed *at once* when they are willed. It does not follow, however, that distant ends, gradually attained, may not also be attained voluntarily. To take a step is voluntary. To take a long walk may also be voluntary. In the former case the action is completed almost at once. In the latter, it begins as the immediate sequel of express volition and is continued by a train of volitions. Or perhaps, having begun, we trudge along without any need for more than a few express volitions. Similarly we may form habits by repeated volitions, steadily diminishing the need for *ad hoc* decisions. Drill is an instance. It enables us, with little express volition, to perform actions which, without the drill, would be likely to require decisions neither sufficiently prompt nor sufficiently accurate.

Imprecision in this matter of timing has led to a curious error which Locke announced with a flourish and William James as well as many others have repeated later. In addition to doing or forbearing, it is said, there is also the possibility of suspending action. "We have a power", said Locke, "to suspend the prosecution of this or that desire; as everyone daily may experiment within himself.

This seems to me to be the source of all liberty ; in this seems to consist that which is (as I think improperly) called *free will*.<sup>1</sup> “ The operation of free effort ”, said William James, “ if it existed, could only be to hold some one ideal object, or part of an object, a little longer or a little more intensely before the mind ”.<sup>2</sup>

Undoubtedly we delay decision very often, and may frequently be wise to do so. “ Counting ten ” may allay anger and so be to our advantage if angry deeds are worse than the suppression of that fiery emotion. A Fabian conscience may be the wisest, though moralists should be rather chary of the opinion. If, however, the suggestion be that these delaying tactics uncover a new and distinct logical possibility, perhaps capable of solving the more minatory of the age-long problems in this perplexing business, it is obviously a puerile suggestion. If by “ doing ” the action you mean doing it *now*, then, if you suspend decision, you do *not* do it now. You forbear from doing it *now* just as clearly as if you never did it. At the relevant time there is no third possibility. If on the other hand you mean doing it *sometime* within a given period, then, again, you either do it or don’t do it within that period. Once again there is no third possibility. *Tertium non datur.*

(e) An ambiguity between what is willed on the one hand and, on the other hand, what is *willingly* done sometimes perplexes discussions of voluntary action. Many actions which we perform at will, which result from choice and so are voluntary, are nevertheless performed reluctantly or, in other words, unwillingly. We think, say, of a willing tax payer as one who pays his taxes with a certain glad alacrity. The sulky, sullen, reluctant tax payer would not be so described. Nevertheless the sulky

<sup>1</sup> *Essay*, II, xxi, § 48.

<sup>2</sup> *The Principles of Psychology*, II, p. 576.

man's payment is voluntary in the sense that he decides to make it. Like all obedience it belongs to the class of actions which are performed *by trying*, not to the type of event with which, like adding a cubit to one's stature in the Scripture example, trying has nothing to do. True the unwilling tax payer, who nevertheless decides to pay, may be still more unwilling to incur the penalty for default ; but, all the same, he pays unwillingly.

Consequently, if the phrase "of my own free will" be taken to mean "willingly" it implies a good deal more than the mere fact that the agent chooses or wills the action. He does not merely choose or decide "at will" or, as some would say, perhaps a trifle vaguely, "perform an action under his control and within his power". He *does* act "at will", but he also acts willingly.

This brings us back to the question of compulsion in its most usual sense, sketchily outlined in the first lecture. As we then saw, the commonest sense of "compulsion" in human affairs is the sense in which an agent is induced by threats or the like to *will* to do something which, without the threats, he would be unlikely to do. That, for instance, is the sense in which we speak of compulsory as opposed to voluntary service in the army. The conscript may be willing to be called up and, in general, an obedience that is "compelled" in this way need not be unwilling obedience. Willing or unwilling, however, it is obedience under penalties whether the threat be in the foreground or in the background of the agent's mind.

If the threat be ferocious, like a summons to stand and deliver at the pistol's point, a normal agent would not be expected to resist it ; but, even in such cases, it would be necessary to point out that, in all probability, he *could* defy the highwayman even if few are usually so plucky. Besides, such alleged compulsion is plainly a matter of degree, and is not confined to the ferocity of highwaymen who are

not quaking in their boots, or to the deceptive mildness of bailiffs and policemen. The pistol's point ; a rubber truncheon ; bare fists ; unlocking the skeleton in the cupboard ; dismissal ; delay in promotion. At some point in such a series of threats the plea of "compulsion" would wear pretty thin though it might not be easy to say where precisely the point lay for any given person.

Moreover, the argument about such alleged artificial "compulsion" is suspect in another way. The negative "compulsion" of threats and sinister hints is only one side of the affair. The other side includes positive inducements. Any one who maintains that the threat of dismissal leaves him no choice, removes the action from the class of actions he performs at will, has difficulty in denying that the assurance of a rise in his salary similarly puts an end to the freedom of his action. Indeed any reasonable prospect of favour or disfavour from other men would, according to this argument, be *pro tanto*, a diminution of the agent's power of acting at will ; and the same would be true if the prospect, although unreasonable, was actually entertained. Could anything be more perverse ? There would be "freedom" only in so far as choice, quite literally, was the choice of indifference, the choice in which there was no conceivable inducement, near or remote, solid or fantastic, to perform rather than to forbear from performing. Who, unless his argument had manœuvred him into inextricable impotence, would defend such a stultifying conception of freedom ?

Nor could the argument be confined to the threats and blandishments of other men. By the same reasoning a man might say that he was compelled by circumstances. There is no reason for stopping at artificial licence and refusing to apply the principle to natural licence. Where, then, would the argument take us ? In so far as circumstances were unfavourable, or were believed to be so, there

would be “compulsion” in that measure, and we should not act at will. In so far as circumstances were favourable, or believed to be so, we should also be precluded from acting at will. In neither case would there be liberty of indifference, the *liberum arbitrium indifferentiae* of the schools.

I said in the last lecture that if either choice or action in accordance with choice is prevented, by human action or otherwise, freedom of action is quite shut out, and I also said that the principle applies, temporarily, to such temporary obstructions as, for the time being, do temporarily prevent. These statements, I still think, are true, although the second of them raises many nice points in many contexts. Neither of them affects our present question, the question, namely, whether there is no choice unless there is literally complete indifference between the alternatives which offer. For such a view no reasonable, indeed no plausible, grounds can be given, supposing, that is, that choice or voluntary action is understood in any sense which describes what actually occurs. When a man chooses he chooses between prospects, and these prospects include inducements, positive or negative as the case may be. His choice is an adjustment to his situation, to his own future (at least as he opines it to be) and to the future of whatever in his environment he may affect. All such prospects include inducements, favourable or unfavourable but not indifferent. He chooses between them.

It may happen very well that, however he chooses, he chooses reluctantly. For he may be in a sad pickle. This, however, is only a proof that, in his hard case, he wills or chooses what in happier times he would never think of choosing. Where is the mystery in that? Aristotle, partly because he did not distinguish as closely as we should do between acting at will and acting willingly, suggested, not too happily, that there might be “mixed

voluntary" actions, actions only near-voluntary not fully voluntary.<sup>1</sup> The skipper who jettisons his cargo in order to save the ship is an instance. But what is the argument? A skipper who threw his cargo overboard just for fun, in some freakish frolic, would not be a seamanly fellow, though, if the action amused him, it could not be said to be an instance of pure freedom of indifference. If in a storm the seamanly course was to jettison the cargo, he would be a bad seaman if he did anything else. The distinction is not between full and partial choice but between choice under adverse circumstances and choice under favourable circumstances. The good seaman is the seaman who chooses wisely in fair weather and in foul.

It should further be noted that, if an action be willed, it really is willed, and must be accepted as such without further ado. The vulgar conceptions of free will with which this lecture is concerned is simply the conception that when a man chooses to do such and such an action *and does it* his action is "free" in an entirely authentic way just because it is performed at will. That is quite final and should resist ulterior manufactured subtleties. To ask whether, when we perform an action "at will", we are "at will" to perform it "at will" is to ask a senseless question. It is like asking whether, if a man chooses, he chooses to choose, and so on indefinitely; like asking whether the man wills to will to will. . . . There is nothing astute or philosophical in asking such questions any more than in asking whether, if there be permission, the permission is itself permitted. As Hobbes said in his celebrated controversy with Bishop Bramhall, "I acknowledge this liberty that I can do if I will; but to say I can will if I will I take to be an absurd speech".<sup>2</sup>

(f) It is sometimes said that willed action, understood

<sup>1</sup> *Nic. Eth. Γ. I*, 6, 1110 a.

<sup>2</sup> *English Books*: Molesworth's ed., V, p. 39.

in this vulgar way is often beneath human freedom. The account given of voluntary muscular action would apply to a crouching cat as well as to an ambushed rifleman, to a dancing bear as well as to Salome. Human free will, it is suggested, should be confined to the deliberate and settled will of a responsible human being. Trivial and irresponsible voluntary movements, like a nod or a wink or a snap of the fingers, should be expunged from the narrative. "Thumbs up" or "thumbs down" might indeed be very serious if they involved the life or the death of a gladiator, but in themselves, regarded as isolated trivial movements, they should be considered to be below the margin of responsible human willing.

Here the intention appears to be to make the conception of "free will" in mankind approximate to high-grade autonomy; but it is arbitrary and I think inconvenient to restrict human freedom to "important" human freedom. It is arbitrary because the division between "important" and "trivial" cuts clean across the factual contrast between what can be performed at will and what remains unaffected by any decision or volition. There is no earthly objection, so far as I can see, to saying that voluntary human actions are sometimes trivial and sometimes important, though equally voluntary in both cases. Again, it is inconvenient because it disturbs the plainer boundaries. And as for the animals why should anyone grudge volition and, with it, free volition to cats and rats and blackbirds and gulls? Human beings are peculiar animals, often privileged, but the day is past when the gulf between them and their animal companions was supposed to be the whole of the story.

Deliberation refers to the process of weighing the alternatives before choosing. It is the better if it be done coolly, and if it is unhurried without being dilatory. Under these favourable conditions a deliberate act of will

is likely to represent the agent's settled mind better than choices more impulsive and off-hand, although there are cases in which precisely the opposite would seem to be the truth. In any case, however, it would be a very serious mistake to hold that snap decisions are, as such, irresponsible decisions. Very often the man has to make his decision snappy if it is to be at all effective, not necessarily because his hurry or flurry is his own fault. Soldiers and seamen may have to make such rapid decisions under circumstances of strenuous responsibility. Let them prepare for such moments in a cool hour. They can never hope to prepare themselves sufficiently for all such eventualities.

Indeed, when we talk about a man's "settled will" we may easily reach a stage in which we confuse all the boundaries in this matter.

When the boundaries are passed, the "settled will" is described as "the whole organised force of the personality", "that which has the true man behind it", or in some other such phrase. It occurs when a man "goes to it with a will". If so, actual decision may be relatively unimportant and even hidden. The case may resemble what evangelists call "conversion". It is no great matter whether a date can be assigned for seeing the light and resolving ever after to be the Lord's. A gradual dawn without definite timing of the flood of light may be just as healthy and just as efficacious, if, indeed, it is not healthier and more efficacious.

Clearly, these descriptions do describe something. They describe the integration of human personality; and that, certainly, is relevant to human action. Unless it is assumed, however, that the integration is itself voluntary, in the sense that volition takes and has taken the lead, it is very doubtful indeed how far "free will" comes into the matter. Much in the process would seem to be simply

development where growth, not will, is the dominant conception. If such questions be left fluid the whole discussion is likely to be fluid and also dark.

This conception of the human will as organised personal autonomy seems to be derived from the adverb "willingly" or from the phrase "with a will" rather than from the motive of acting "at will". We can scarcely expect to have it both ways ; and since we have to choose between "willingly" and "at will" it seems to be clear that the latter and not the former is fundamental in debates about free will. That, at any rate, is the view I am expressing.

I am also maintaining that voluntary choice, so far from being a superficial negligible epiphenomenon of the deeper surges of sub-voluntary processes has an importance difficult to exaggerate in human affairs. Command and obedience, and consequently all political government, are voluntary actions. Similarly, rewards and penalties, exhortations and appeals are addressed to the voluntary part of a man. There is no point in exhorting a man to grow a third set of teeth, or in promising him a bonus if he grows them and a thrashing if he doesn't. It is by voluntary action, too, that men set about building ships and sailing the seas, prospecting for ores and digging for them. So men's volitions have changed the face of man's earth.

No doubt if human choice were a superficial epiphenomenon it would be present in all these cases, and would look like a cause though in fact it would be an idler present at the relevant time and at no others, like a schoolboy turning up for every roll-call but not at other times. Since a human volition, at the best, is only a part-cause of any human action, it is always possible to try to be very deep by belittling its importance. There are always the remaining part-causes to cite. But with what reason do we belittle volition ? We have as good evidence as we

have anywhere in Nature that human choice does effect a relevant change ; in particular that it makes a critical difference in human behaviour ; and that it makes *the* critical difference in many affairs of moment. There are no serious grounds at all for assuming it to be an idler. I promised to return to this question in the last lecture, but have now, I think, said all that need be said about it.

With these rather elaborate notes I shall end the first part of this lecture. Let me briefly review the course of it. There are actions which we choose, elect or decide to perform or to forbear from performing. When we so choose, we do perform them or forbear from performing them. The class of such actions, called "voluntary actions", is the class of actions—there may be nothing else that strictly deserves to be called an "action"—that we perform or inhibit "at will". To act "at will" is the vulgar conception of freedom of action. When a man does what he chooses to do he is acting "freely" in the vulgar sense. Philosophers should respect this vulgar conception, not because it is vulgar but because it describes plain fact. Locke in the earlier part of his tortuous chapter on "power" said so.<sup>1</sup> So did Hobbes<sup>2</sup> whom Locke seems here to have followed pretty closely though without the acknowledgements which might have been embarrassing. But whatever these philosophers or any other philosophers of high standing may have said, it is safe to affirm that anyone who adopts that sense of freedom of action and sticks to it has adopted and is sticking to something which is final in what it asserts, and is a datum which, properly understood, leaves no room for dispute.

If determinism or any other such theory was unable to distinguish between voluntary actions and non-voluntary

<sup>1</sup> *Essay*, II, chap. xxi.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., in his controversies with Bramhall.

behaviour it would, by that very fact, be unworthy of anyone's serious attention. Thus determinism would reduce itself to absurdity if it reduced all human action to the jerks of puppets. For puppets do not decide to jerk themselves.

Clear-headed determinists assert no such thing, but it is worth remarking that if libertarians, in their turn, deny the distinction between voluntary and non-voluntary, they also would condemn themselves. Several indeterminists do not seem to have noticed the circumstance.

During the remainder of this lecture I shall discuss certain questions concerning *knowledgeable* choice. Their relevance should be apparent. Blind choice, if it ever occurs, occurs seldom and has slender claims to our attention. Serious and responsible choice must always be knowledgeable in an appreciable measure. Again, if knowledge be power, it is power because it increases the range of effective choice, extending its scope except for the excision of futilities, a matter of at least equal importance. True, the adventurous will has its claims to respect as well as the cautious will ; but the will which wittingly takes great risks, the audacious will when the future is dark, is not excluded by these reflections. Ignorance, if it succeeds, succeeds just by luck. It is essential to examine the place of guidance.

What we choose or decide to attempt to bring about is often a result pretty remote from the initiating voluntary action. If you have a spade, and a piece of ground and are fit, digging for victory is a voluntary action ; but the crop depends on much else. It would be a mistake to say, however, that your choice is limited to the mere action of digging. Apart from the ulterior intention, the digging would be pointless. You are digging—for. Again, you are responsible for many of the effects of your choice remote from your initiating act, just as, to choose another

illustration, you are responsible for the flight of the bullet as well as for pressing the trigger.

Here several perplexities arise, mostly quite familiar. A voluntary action, if knowledgeable at all, is an action in which the agent means or intends to effect something. Plainly, however, there may be a very great difference between what he means to effect and what he actually does effect. A pianist may strike the wrong note. He strikes voluntarily but not what he meant to strike. I shall examine some aspects of this problem very soon.

Another prickly question, also very familiar, arises from the bland enquiry, "What action is to be accounted just *one* action?", a question which shouts at us as soon as we begin to consider what are called ulterior intentions. Suppose, for instance, that a blackmailer rescues the victim whom he has worried into attempting suicide. Some moralists would say, fairly plausibly, that the rescue was right, the blackmailing wrong, and leave it at that. Can it be left there? Are there two actions, one right and one wrong? Anyone who can distinguish, let us say, between murder and manslaughter has to admit, I think, that an intentional action has to be defined by its entire intention. It is a unity in so far as the intention is a unity. If so, prolonging-a-life-for-purposes-of-extortion is not two actions but one even if the actual extortion be delayed till after the rescue. It may reasonably be maintained that the action is right in respect of being a rescue but wrong in respect of its extortionate purpose. That, however, is a different contention and does not imply the fission of the action into two actions.

Let us return to the first type of perplexity. The statement, "Yes I did it but I didn't know what I was doing, didn't *mean* to do what I did, didn't really *will* the result," is common enough as an excuse and is not altogether rare

among the modest heroes who say, "Yes I did it, but I had colossal luck". We may examine some typical cases.

(1) It would be very unusual for an agent to perform an action without having any idea at all of what he was doing. That might happen if he were dazed, or drugged, or drunk, in which case moral comments would be out of the question unless the ignorance itself could be said to have been willed indirectly, the agent having known well enough that if he drugged or dosed himself in certain injudicious ways the effect would be that he would lose his wits for a time. There is no need to linger over that type of instance.

(2) What is much more usual occurs when the agent knows quite a lot about what he is doing, but doesn't know enough and, in particular, doesn't know what turns out to be the crucial point in the business. He may know, for instance, that he is pointing a gun and pressing the trigger, and yet be ignorant that the gun was loaded. The agents in a melodrama usually know that they are feeding a starving man but not that they are feeding an escaped convict who is their own brother kidnapped in infancy and reputed dead. It would be tedious to make a list of the sub-types of ignorance of this order—ignorance of the instrument, of manner, of amount, of degree and so forth. In any case Aristotle has done it,<sup>1</sup> but although the instances I have cited do not show a profound acquaintance with human life, they may serve well enough.

In all such cases it would generally be allowed that the agent's part-ignorance had the closest relevance to his responsibility, i.e. (at least for present purposes) to whether he meant and willed to do what he did. This being admitted, further questions hang upon it. Was the agent's ignorance, at the material time, a piece of avoidable carelessness upon his part? If it wasn't avoidable *then*, was it

<sup>1</sup> *Nic. Eth.*, Γ 1, 1111a.

indirectly avoidable if he had spent his youth more wisely ?  
And so on.

There are some advantages in making a graded list of vulgar presumptions concerning knowledge and ignorance of fact with respect to the human will.

In nearly all discussions of this matter it is agreed that a responsible agent has, or should be presumed to have, quite a lot of fairly reliable knowledge about what he is doing. That is the difference (or is presumed to be the difference) between adults and young children, between sane persons and madmen or imbeciles. If there were no such presumption, nearly every question about desert and about responsibility would be moving in an atmosphere of fantasy and crazy conjecture.

What we usually assume, then, is a certain level of presumptive common knowledge (sometimes called common sense). Speaking generally, we have no good reason for denying that the presumption sticks pretty closely to the facts ; but, clearly, it should not be regarded as a fixed unalterable entity at all times and places. There is presumptive common knowledge in Great Britain to-day about the more obvious ways of motor cars which was wholly absent last century, and now is better developed among British children than among their grandmothers.

Similarly there is presumptive special knowledge among classes of people—what every woman knows, what every seaman knows, what every doctor knows, what every orthopaedic surgeon knows, and so forth. This also varies from time to time and from place to place. What every doctor knows to-day is not what every doctor knew in the time of Galen or of Sydenham. What every Russian doctor knows to-day need not be identical with what every Peruvian doctor knows to-day.

Further, there is a general duty of improving common knowledge as well as of improving professional and other

special knowledge. Our common sense should be an improvement upon the common sense of our fathers in an all-round way as well as with regard to aeroplanes and motor cars. Within each profession or skilled calling, again, there is the duty, whose partial fulfilment is a reasonable expectation, of advancing the level of knowledge presumptively present in most at least of the members of the profession or calling. In a complex civilisation, however, none should expect to be an expert save in one occupation and, very likely, only in a part of that. It is therefore unreasonable to expect anyone to be a specialist outside his profession or calling, even if he had had the ability to excel in some other profession had he selected it. When a schoolmaster of forty is not his own competent physician he need not reproach himself for a wasted youth whether or not he might have made doctoring his trade at an earlier time.

So in the end the critical matter is the knowledge that any given person actually has, the extent to which he could voluntarily have increased his knowledge had he made a better use of his voluntary opportunities in the past, the extent to which, having the relevant knowledge, he uses it rightly at the right time. In all such ways private men vary very much despite the uniformity, actual or presumed, of common knowledge in their time and of special knowledge within their class.

(3) These remarks about our foreknowledge of fact, actual or presumptive, common, special and individual, have not, I hope, been entirely idle. None of them, however, envisages the case in which the agent might truthfully say, "Yes, I did it but *nobody* could have foretold the sequel". This applies to what are piously or credulously called "acts of God". In other language they are called sheer luck, un conjectured and beyond human conjecture.

Whatever terms we employ, the point goes pretty deep.

Every choice is future-regarding and the future is always uncertain. Metaphysically, I should say, we do not foreknow for certain that the present moment will have any temporal successor at all. If that be a metaphysical crotchet, not a metaphysical verity, it is at any rate clear that we don't foreknow for certain that there will be a tomorrow in the sense that the sun will rise, not having collided with a comet and not having released its nuclear atomic energy from some other cause. The agent, again, may die of a sudden, and in many other less spectacular ways it is beyond doubt that our foreknowledge, such as it is, is nowhere near foreknowing-for-certain. This obvious fact is independent of determinism and its consequences. Even if, in theory, there were data sufficient for accurate prediction, no human being could predict the sequel to any voluntary human action with complete accuracy. His guesses might be very shrewd, but that would be all.

For this there are many reasons. The volition, at the most, is only a part cause, however critical its importance in a cause-cluster much of which is unknown. Again causes do not stop at their first impact, and although their remoter effects, being more and more intermixed with the effects of other causes, may reasonably enough be supposed to be weakened by diffusion, weakness is not non-entity. While, as I have said, it is important to remember that human choice may be and frequently is knowledgeable in a very serviceable degree so that, where it makes a critical difference, it may be genuinely sagacious, it is at least equally necessary to remember that the best in this kind is but probable, and that, very frequently indeed, there is no marked balance of probability even among the most knowledgeable.

All these statements have been about "knowledge" or ignorance of fact, fact about the agent's powers and of the probable effect of what he believes to be his powers when

exercised upon his environment in such and such a volition. The discussion, I know, has been incomplete in several ways, but its expansion would involve a lack of proportion. "Knowledge of fact", however, that is to say, fairly accurate conjecture regarding the effects of our volitions, is not the only "knowledge" which is relevant to human choice, nor, according to many moralists, the most important knowledge. There is also the knowledge of right and good.

Suppose that an agent had a very shrewd idea of what the consequences of  $x$  would be, and also a very shrewd idea of the consequences of  $y$ . Suppose, further, that he has the choice between  $x$  and  $y$ . Then, moralists would say, his principal moral problems begin. According to some of these moralists, he has to ask himself whether  $x$  or  $y$  be the better course, to consider the goodness of the alternatives, assuming the knowledge of what the alternatives factually are. If virtuous, he will choose the better way, recognising that for a virtuous man, goodness is what matters. According to other moralists the rightness of an action is not, or at least need not be, a derivative of its goodness ; and in their view it is always the rightness not the goodness that matters morally in voluntary action. For both parties, however, knowledge of fact is not enough. They allow that a shrewd estimate of the consequences of the alternatives, together with an adequate understanding of the nature of the action initiating either of them, is required. But the next step, for both of them, is still more important. That step is the examination of the factual alternatives in respect of goodness or badness. Descriptions of fact do not include its goodness or its rightness.

I am aware that these statements are put in words which imply, ostensibly at least, that goodness and rightness are objective characteristics, and that the accuracy of this way of speaking has been much disputed. I have neither the

wish nor an adequate excuse for discussing such questions now, though I should obviously be entitled to say that an equally fundamental distinction would remain if goodness, let us say, should be expressed in the optative and not in the indicative mood. If in any sense whatever either goodness or rightness is a proper directive to moral choice it concerns human volition and is never identical with knowledge of fact on any natural and reasonable interpretation of that phrase. If not, there is, properly speaking, no ethics at all.

I shall also not enquire whether, given "knowledge of fact" in the sense described, knowledge of its goodness or rightness should or should not be supposed to be fallible. Where men differ about the goodness or about the rightness of any proposed course of action it is always possible to argue that they do not agree in detail about the nature of the said course of action and are arguing about an abstraction which each of them clothes differently. Possible but not, I think, likely. Abandoning such discussion, however, we should (I submit) agree with most moralists that the problems of conscientious choice are problems about the goodness or rightness of what is chosen. They presuppose a serviceable knowledge of what the alternatives are, but that presupposition comes nowhere near to being the whole of the business.

While as already remarked there are many close connections between the freedom and the knowledgeableness of human choice, the most obvious connections of the considerations I have been advancing in the second part of this lecture are with autonomy. Indeed, in many discussions of these features of the human situation, nothing else is contemplated. What is argued is that a man is a responsible, accountable agent if *he* is the agent who does the deed, if *he* is its *ἀρχή* (archē) and prime mover, *he* and nobody else. If we further enquire "responsible to

whom?—to himself? to his fellows? to his rulers? to his God?"—the answer is that, however that question may be answered, every answer worth a moment's consideration presupposes that a responsible human agent has attained a certain type and level of self-government and self-determination.

The deed is *his*, we are told, precisely in so far as *he* is its author and in effective control. There may be a sense in which a worm is the author of some of its wriggles. In a man what is fundamental is the type of self-government. This in its turn is self-determination by knowledgeable choice, the knowledge in question involving both a serviceable knowledge of the agent's own powers, and the understanding of good and of right. *His* actions spring from *his* knowledgeable decisions, from the decisions which he makes when in his right mind. If he be dazed or intimidated at the time of acting, or so ignorant as not to know what he is doing in any adequate sense, then, it is said, *he* is not the author of the action in any manly way and he may validly disown such so-called "actions" unless his own former negligence was at the bottom of the trouble. What is salient in the problem is the type and level of the autonomy.

Clearly these are important contentions. They describe a certain level of human action which in intelligible ways may claim dignity and authority as well as authorship. The type of self-government and self-determination which a man exhibits when he knows what he is about and is in his right mind is something very precious, not seriously impugned by the reminder that self-determination asserts at the most the primacy, not the sufficiency, of the self, that the term "self-government" contains dubious metaphor, that rational willing is not the only type of human self-regulation and in some people's opinion only seldom the best, and that if a man be a human agent only

when his rational autonomy is exercised in its perfection, it is very doubtful whether, in this sense, there *are* any completely genuine human agents.

The discussion of these points given in the first lecture need not be repeated here. What I am saying now is only that the knowledgeable type of self-direction exists, is well worth developing and is rightly regarded as relevant to our theme. It is much more than mere freedom, but in so far as the self takes the lead, it has the "freedom" of self-determination as opposed to other-determination. One hesitates to affirm that a clear head is either the whole of a man or the whole of what is true in a man but nobody need dispute the simple truth that a man who does not have his wits about him in an effective sense is not much of a man.

Indeterminism, of course, is quite another question. When there is self-determination the self does determine. It is a *vera causa*, not necessarily an uncaused cause. Taking the lead, it need not take the lead causelessly.

## LECTURE III

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### Some other Aspects of Human Freedom

IN the last lecture we examined acting at will and the freedom that goes along with it. It is sound policy, I submit, to put that question in the foreground, in other words, to follow tradition in laying more emphasis upon the freedom of the human will than upon any other aspect of human freedom. No doubt, as Locke<sup>1</sup> and many others have insisted, the fundamental question is whether a *man* be free, not whether his "will" be free, and there may be a certain risk (though not, I think, a very big risk) of dividing a man's substance into separate compartments or "faculties" in a way which, innocent at first, becomes troublesome later. The amended statement that a man's "will" means "what he does when he acts at will" may sometimes have to be made; but it is longer and it would often be cumbrous or pedantic or both.

In later lectures as in the last lecture I shall continue to be occupied chiefly with problems of the freedom of the human will, believing that a man's freedom in his voluntary actions is a first thing which should be put first. On the other hand, it is plain that a man's volitional freedom is not the only human freedom that either philosophers or other men discuss whether they are talking metaphysics or talking something else. Human freedom to grow and to develop, and whatever "freedom" may be held to be

<sup>1</sup> *Essay*, II, xxi, § 15.

implied in life itself is not primarily freedom of will, and the same should probably be said of impulsive freedom, creative freedom (if such freedom there be) and, in certain respects at least, of freedom of thought. In any case we must be prepared to examine such human freedom as may be largely if not entirely extra-volitional. These extra-volitional freedoms have a definite meaning in their usual contexts and, in such contexts, are definitely contrasted with what is not freedom. The context may be very metaphysical indeed as in many accounts of *mens creatrix* or of the primary *élan* of human as of all other life. It may also be innocent of any smudge of metaphysics without thereby ceasing to be important.

In the present lecture, then, I shall be dealing very largely with questions about human "freedom" which are not primarily questions about the freedom of the human will. I shall, however, spend most of my time discussing what would usually be called the freedom of the human spirit rather than the freedom of the human body. This, although but a part of the general question, is quite big enough for a lecture.

Let us begin with an enquiry into impulse. Much impulsive human action, it is true, is voluntary in the sense that there is usually some voluntary control of the action. If it were not so there would be no point in injunctions to give impulse its head and not to curb it except as a last desperate resource. All the same the impulse itself is regarded as a "spring of action" antecedent to volition whether or not volition can cherish or restrain it. It is material on which volition is supposed to work, much as on our muscular or other "powers". This being understood, it is often maintained that human beings are free when they act impulsively and otherwise are not free. What, then, is this "freedom" of impulse?

As a negative the meaning is plain. The impulse is free

if it is not checked or baulked, and so fulfils or expresses itself. All that has to be examined under this head is the manner of the baulking, a subject to which I shall return in due course.

But a positive if sporadic type of autonomy is also assumed. The impulse, as I have said, using Bentham's language, is regarded as an ultimate spring of action within the man, whether it be an original personal spring or a racial impulse-pattern sometimes called an "instinct". The freedom is freedom of self-determination, the assumption being that we can trace self-determination back to impulse and there have to stop.

Psychologically, though not psycho-physiologically or psycho-biologically, the view may be plausible. Introspectively the impulse may well seem to be final, and since in so many of these arguments we have to use and have every right to use introspective evidence, we cannot consistently repudiate introspection in the case of impulse and welcome it elsewhere. We should also allow that if, introspectively, we search diligently for something and don't find it, there is some evidence not merely that we can't see it, but also that nothing at all is there. Clearly, however, very many of these impulsive springs of action, particularly the appetitive ones, are reactions, not cause-free first causes, not instances of absolute spontaneity. The springs, like other springs, are fed even if we don't see how they are fed by merely looking at them. The importance of negative introspection, therefore, may very easily be exaggerated. Very frequently indeed it is grossly exaggerated in many discussions about human freedom. Men *feel* their freedom, it is said. They experience absolute spontaneity. If there be nothing to support such views except an apparent discontinuity in the stream of our consciousness, the contention is not very impressive. Even if there be something quite fresh about

certain impulses they are not absolutely first beginnings in most relevant senses let alone in all senses.

In any case the argument would apply to our primitive impulses only, whether pre-natal, present at birth or supervening at a later stage as the life becomes riper. What would have to be shown would be, not that there was an impulse, but that it was genuinely primitive. This requirement is far too severe for most accounts of the identity of free with impulsive action. For most such theorists any impulse will serve, for instance the impulse to write, or to address a meeting, or to strut upon the stage. There is no primitive impulse in such cases, strong as such impulses may become, unless it is something very vague indeed like the assertion that every man, by nature, is a vanity bag. Very often the relevant impulse is acquired, not primitive, and acquired in ways quite possible to trace even by the subject himself. The theory becomes the "Do as thou wouldst" of the Abbé of Thelema. A man is free when he does what he feels like doing.

When this point is reached, the scene lies wide open. What is asserted is just autonomy with the proviso that the autonomy is an affair of feeling and appetite, not of reflection. Why the proviso? Is there no impulse to think, for that matter no *primitive* impulse to think and even to reflect very diligently? If there be human autonomy can such autonomy be fairly described either sub-reflectively or in terms of spasms and packets of impulse? To do as you please is to do as you are minded to do. A theory of the whole mind is needed. So the impulse theory has to argue its case in detail against many rivals.

Let us return to the negative side of the question. With what is impulsive freedom contrasted?

In general it is contrasted with the baulking of impulse. This, in its turn, might include an artificial extension of natural licence, by attempts to make the environment a

rather better playground of impulse than it would be if it were left alone. More usually the doctrine is a warning to parents, educators, social reformers and governments not to starve or repress natural impulses if they can possibly avoid doing so. That is an intelligible programme, much of it very sound, even apart from the voluminous doleful literature about repressed neurotics. In a civilisation in which so many make a living in such very odd ways it would be surprising indeed if strong native impulses were not persistently and extensively baulked. The danger is obvious and cannot be dismissed with a shrug of the shoulders.

So far, so plain. The extended, complementary argument is about the internal rather than about the external repression of impulse. Restraint, it is said, is exhausting, especially self-restraint. So let us be rid of it *libertatis causa*.

Here there should be a pause. We need not affirm, with some moralists, that the man who does as he pleases, pays as he does not please ; but there are dangers of that kind. The Cyrenaic tactics of snatching the coarsest joys from the coarsest moments, ignoring the future, are at least questionable. No doubt impulses need not be coarse ; and prudes should not coarsen any impulse whatever. But some impulses, some even that are strong and primitive, are cruel and ugly. In any case there are few who would seriously maintain that if every impulse were given its head, a good time would be had by all. No human being is a mere jumble of sporadic impulses. If he were there would still be conflicts, distraction and exhaustion. There would have to be accommodation of the impulses, however unreflecting the pattern. Some impulses would be hard to accommodate, in other words would have to be appreciably repressed even if none was radically evil, ugly, soul-corrosive. In short, the question

is not about separate impulses, each unchecked and growing on what it feeds, but about some sort of pattern of action ; and each such pattern has its own type of restraint. Something has to give way if there are dominant instincts, a ruling passion, or whatever the pattern may be. That would be true even if the pattern, as Mr. Crump in *Nicholas Nickleby* said of the unities, were little more than “ a sort of a general oneness if I may be allowed so strong an expression ”.

Accordingly when the contrast (as is common) is said to be a clear-cut division between the freedom of impulse and the exhausting restrictions of reflection (or, perhaps, of “ reason ”) there is patent omission of the various ways in which one impulse frequently baulks another. A more important matter, however, is the assumption that the whole office of reason and reflection is to restrict human action. On the contrary, if human beings acted only on impulse their lives, if not nasty, would be very narrow. Knowledge of fact enlarges our powers enormously, and there is no disservice if it diminishes folly. Is the complaint then that our knowledge of good and of right is always a tiresome restraint ? It would be hard to sustain such a charge regarding the knowledge of good. No doubt we may miss much of the substance of good by unduly prolonging the critical analysis of the concept of it, obscuring what is vivid in it in the grey of theory. But reflection on life’s values is not, as such, their repression or their restraint. What Shaftesbury called “ the real science or taste of life ” <sup>1</sup> and took to be ethics is not an attempt at illiberal suppression.

So there remains the restraining hand of the “ right ” if that be distinct from, not a derivative of, the “ good ”. The right, very often indeed, is represented as a gaoler or duenna. It is said to spring from taboo, to be a restrictive

<sup>1</sup> *Characteristics*, ed. 1723, III, p. 168.

superego, a mysterious superindividual entanglement which this ego or that ego, in other words you or I, partially assimilates in some unaccountable way, and by doing so entangles itself, very likely beyond redemption, in a net of debilitating restrictions all the worse because the assimilating ego reckons them to be what in part they really are, a piece of its mind. Duty, according to these theories, is the stern daughter of conventional superstitions. She frowns upon all that is free.

Translated into more concrete terms this means that a man who keeps his word at some cost to himself or at none, a man who is veracious on principle whether or not he has an impulse to evade the truth, and so on, is invariably putting a morbid and indeed a fantastic restriction upon his action. So stated the doctrine is simply absurd. If it be amended in the minimum possible way with the frank admission that, to use Bergson's terms,<sup>1</sup> the "closed" morality of respectability need not be either mere restriction or arbitrary convention and that the "open" morality of prophets, would-be reformers and eccentrics, has restrictions of its own there is no longer a sharp antithesis between impulse, which is always free, and reflection, which is always restrictive. Instead there is an extensive field for patient enquiry with no questions begged.

Many of these arguments could be transferred from morality to art and æsthetics without substantial change. As regards "good", Shaftesbury was not the only philosopher who thought in terms of the beauty of goodness, of *kalokagathia* (*καλοκάγαθία*) and maintained that moral goodness was the grave dignity, the serene and solemn beauty of human conduct in affairs of moment. Stoics, Kantians and Presbyterians, it is true, oppose such views. It is not the beauty of the moral law that they worship. Nevertheless, in their case also, there are near-resemblances

<sup>1</sup> In *Les deux sources*.

between the formalists in art and the formalists in morals, between restraint in classical art and the stringency of moral law. An impulsive ethics lays claim to be a romantic ethics and so does an impulsive æsthetics.

The freedom so confidently ascribed by romantics to their æsthetic policy is primarily negative. It need not renounce all restraints, but it rejoices in the adventure and experiment of renouncing very many. Sometimes it avows itself creative, and aligns its artistry either with God the creator or less theologically with the creative evolution of Nature.

I have already made certain slighting comments upon the claim in the first lecture but must now be prepared to meet a formal challenge. As in any other duel the fight takes place at a suitable appointed spot. It is not an all-in struggle occurring anywhere in the wide. To drop metaphor, the topic now to be examined is the alleged creativeness of human art and imagination in contrast with human acts and mental processes which are *not* creative. God's creation of the world is outside the picture. Of that it may here suffice to say, parenthetically, that God's creation of His universe is declared to be His *making* of the universe, but not out of pre-existing material ; that God's *modus operandi* in the creation of His universe is admittedly an impenetrable mystery ; but that (for reasons which, I confess, seem to me to be utterly dark) creation implies a more convincing form of divine self-determination than, say, emanation, and so is less likely than any other doctrine to feed the heretical opinion that God acts jointly with anything else whatever. Similarly the creative evolution of Nature, whatever that may mean, is outside the picture. What in a man is said not to be "creative" belongs to the burgeoning of time just as much as what is said to be creative in him. So universal creativeness is not to the point.

As a contrast-term "creative" may serve well enough. I am doubtful, indeed, whether imaginative or any other kind of thinking is accurately described as a kind of making. In it one notices or perhaps, in Whitehead's language, oneprehends ; but need there be making, be manufacture ? Allowing, however, either definitely or for the nonce, that imagination is a species of making, as the production of books and statues and Persian rugs certainly is, it is clear that much human imagination has a roving freedom and an apparent spontaneity that other types of human imagination, and other mental processes in mankind which are not imaginative do not have. At the very lowest level there are whimsies, and fantasies, and escapist day-dreams. At the top there is romantic genius.

The term "creative", understood as a vaguely suggestive label, is relatively innocuous as well as serviceable and need not be taken portentously in the manner of Miss Dorothy Sayers in *The Mind of the Maker*. If, however, the contention be that creative imagination is a proof of man's absolute authorship and entirely self-derived initiative, to say nothing of cause-free spontaneity, it is time to call a halt. If the contrast be between what we make in imagery and what we find by the senses we have to say substantially what Locke said, namely, that "if a child were kept in a place where he never saw any other but black and white till he were a man, he would have no more ideas of scarlet or green than he that from his childhood never tasted an oyster, or a pineapple, has of those particular relishes".<sup>1</sup> The stuff that dreams are made on comes from what is observed in waking life. Imagination, if a maker, does not make out of nothing ; and if the contrast, as is but proper, is not between percepts and images, many of the latter being admittedly reproduced, not fashioned creatively, "creative" imagination, how-

<sup>1</sup> *Essay*, II, i, § 6.

ever plastic, or, as Coleridge put it, however esemplastic it may be is also not a making out of nothing. It has its materials.

In so far as an artist is a craftsman, a sculptor, say, or a goldsmith eliciting beauty from his materials, he is, in one sense, just an ordinary maker and has only the freedom the material allows. That, I may be told, is a stupid comment. A statue is not just one of the shapes eternally present in a block of marble and released by the sculptor's chisel. The sculptor, in Alexander's phrase,<sup>1</sup> has "mixed his mind" with the chisel and the marble. That is where, if he be great, his creative imagination comes in; and if the artist's imagination is in his head, not on canvas or in print or in graceful pottery, the freedom is even more apparent after all proper allowances have been made for whatever degree of truth may be contained in the view that imaginative experiments with imagery are also, in their own way, accommodated to their image-stuff, verse to words, visual art to visual shapes and so on. So be it. It is not creation out of nothing or from something so airy as to tolerate *any* form without the faintest protest.

I do not say that every poem could be treated as Mr. Lowes in *The Road to Xanadu* has treated Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, tracing so high a proportion of the images (which, according to Coleridge, "rose up before him as things") to their sources in earlier reading and personal experience, or that, if some such history could be given, the product is not something new, the like of which never appeared before, either imaginatively or otherwise. The contrast between, on the one hand, what is borrowed from others or is substantially recollection, though rather vague recollection and somewhat loose, and on the other hand, what is said to have the novelty of original genius is far too noticeable to be evaded in any such way.

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g. *Beauty and Other Forms of Value*, p. 19.

Certainly, there are senses in which the former is tied and the latter unbound, unrestricted, free. I am only concerned with rash philosophising, with hurried leaps into spurious ultimates.

Nor would a discussion of artistic genius appreciably alter the situation. I am not rash enough to hazard a definition of what genius may be. Some of it seems to be a prodigious capacity for sparing pains, for economy of power when something great is at stake, but whatever a more adequate account of it might be it is not to be supposed that any human "genius" is not a man but is literally a god. He is outstanding among his fellows, showing in an eminent degree qualities that men admire, to the point, it may be of reverence as well as merely of wonder. But he is not superhuman and he need not so regard himself even when, like Thackeray on one occasion, he drops his pen and exclaims: "Genius, by God!"

It seems unlikely that any clear message regarding freedom or unfreedom could be decoded either from what a man of genius himself says, or from the reports of admiring witnesses. If, as is common, his intense concentration is called "inspiration", if his "genius", as etymology would suggest, is regarded as his attendant spirit, his familiar ministering angel, the inference would be that the product of his genius is not even self-originated but comes from an invisible outsider; and the inspiration of the Delphic priestesses came, not at all invisibly, from subterranean sources. Such explanations involve the rooted determinism which is characteristic of all magic. From the viewpoint of the man who is said to be inspired, or who believes himself to be inspired, such a description, seemingly positive, is fundamentally negative. What he does seems to be beyond his volition, not what he chooses to do by any knowledgeable decision.

It seems to control him, not he to control it. It "stands up like a thing". If in a sense it comes from him, he can't for the life of him say how. Hence, if he be too much of a modernist to talk easily about familiar spirits he takes refuge in "the unconscious". That is at least inaccessible to his observation and may be supposed, as by Yeats and Jung, to be atavistic in principle, somehow suffused with the archaic essence of all humanity. It would be imprudent to attempt to speculate with precision on the extent to which such an atavistic, universal subconscious was "free"; but in its influence upon individual men it is understood as a cause which is not itself uncaused and so is a deterministic conception.

The artistry and indeed the æsthetic quality of science are just as notable as the artistry of painters, poets and other such makers. A scientific, an interpretative, a mathematical imagination may therefore be as "creative" and also as "free" as the imagination of any poet. As in the fine arts it is contrasted with what is borrowed, imitative, or recalled. Nothing that has been said in this lecture is a denial of human originality in its ordinary sense. It is quite unnecessary to try to qualify the originality of scientific innovators by pointing out, as is usually true, that most scientific inventions spring from ideas which, as we say, are "in the air" at the time, and are not something brand new in the solitary mind of a hermit. We might as well complain that nearly all imaginative writers accept a conventional pattern—as novelists do, and epic poets and dramatists do. Nothing, again, has been said so much as to suggest that any science is, so to say, squeezed out of the observed facts, that the prime factor in scientific method is not the putting of leading questions, the formulation of hypotheses capable of some sort of verification, weak or strong. These hypotheses, if they are constructed, may be constructed voluntarily. But they may also turn

up as an answer to prayer rather than as anything whose history is known and the manner of its fashioning willed and controlled. It seems unnecessary, however, to institute a special examination of our freedom to guess and to suppose. There are obvious senses in which we are freer to guess than to describe ; but it is much more workmanlike to consider all such questions under the general rubric of the freedom of human thought and human intelligence, with which topic the rest of this lecture will be concerned.

Freedom of thought has obvious connections with freedom of the expression of thought, freedom to utter one's thought in speech and otherwise. Indeed there are many advantages in beginning with a discussion of this aspect of the affair.

The first reactions of a sobered and startled world, become of a sudden unusually philosophical when the first atomic bomb obliterated so much of Hiroshima, are sufficient to indicate many of the essentials of the question. In its first leading article on August 8, 1945, *The Times*, referring to a letter from the President of the Royal Society in its columns on that day, said that the attempt to maintain secrecy regarding the construction of the atomic bomb when peace came would be "treason to the spirit of science itself". These were not Sir H. H. Dale's actual words. Most of what he said was less rhetorical and more detailed ; but he ended his letter by declaring that "the true spirit of science, working in freedom, seeking the truth only and fearing only falsehood and concealment, offers its lofty and austere contribution to man's moral equipment, which the world cannot afford to lose or to diminish".

That on the face of it is an unequivocal declaration that (scientific) thought and its adequate expression should be utterly "free" ; but few who read the letter could have believed, even then, that the matter was quite so simple.

During the war—and there *was* war at the time—there could have been legal treason had any British or American entist divulged any of the fearful secrets known to them but not to their enemies. Are we then to say that in war ason to the spirit of science is a lesser treason than ason to one's country? If we say "Yes—in war one's country comes before one's science. *Inter arma silent mentiae*", we are not batting on an easy moral wicket. we say, "No—war or no war, the claims of truth and its divulgence are always paramount", we are saying nething which, on any estimate, is scarcely sun-clear. Can it be said then that the moral problem ceases as on as the shooting stops, that in time of peace, however easy the peace may be, and whatever the hesitations and injunctions of one's political government, the fullest divulgence of scientific knowledge, however liable to abuse by madmen and by bad men, is a clear duty without any iations whatever?

To me at least a confident affirmative seems out of the question, and if I am right about that I have done enough to prove my point, namely that freedom of thought and its expression are not unqualified moral obligations in circumstances.

I need scarcely add, I hope, that these remarks are not intended as a general discussion of the use of the atomic bomb or of atomic energy. They have dealt only with one of the earliest moral reactions in Great Britain to the news about Hiroshima's destruction. At that time Nagasaki was still standing, to say nothing of the subsequent change from war to peace. The single point I have raised suffices for present purposes, and it concerns the expression of thought quite as obviously as "the spirit of science". It also invites consideration of what the expression of thought and the adequate pursuit of thought may involve.

Consider the statement, " You may *think* what you like about the release of atomic energy but you may not *say* what you think because if you do somebody may express himself harmfully in the utterance of laboratory experiment ". Freedom to think but to be mum might not make a very strong appeal to anyone, even to the most taciturn of scientists. If you say, " There is no need to be mum. Only dangerous speech is prohibited ", you are only evading the trouble. Who knows what speech is dangerous, and who is to decide ? If again you say, " The argument is grossly exaggerated. It describes as the utterance of thought, not speech only but five hundred million pounds worth of scientific experiment in physics ", what is the value of your reply ? Was not this expenditure an expression of human thought, the appropriate utterance of those who took the thought seriously ? What is freedom of the utterance of thought if it excludes freedom to test and develop the thought in the appropriate way ?

Still, *pace* some behaviourists, there is no denying that a man may think and be mum in all relevant senses of being mum. Let us then accept the restriction and discuss the extent to which mum thought is free.

What is very frequently said is that so long as a man remains mum, he thinks as he chooses and nobody else in the world can stop him. The proverb that you may lead a horse to the water but cannot make him drink is sometimes cited in support.

Not being an experienced groom, I shall not discuss the proverb. I should have thought you could make the horse pretty thirsty. Leaving the horse, we have to deal with an assertion about human autonomy and initiative. From the nature of the case, it is said, a man does his own thinking just as he digests his own porridge or feels his own headaches. Somewhat less generally, it is also main-

tained that a man's thoughts are voluntary but, unlike many other voluntary actions, cannot be coerced by other people. You cannot *bid* a man believe with any hope of success though you may order him to repeat the words of some creed, with a reasonable expectation that the command will be obeyed.

Let us examine these two points, namely whether mum thinking is voluntary and whether it cannot be coerced.

Certainly we may set ourselves to think and, trying, do often succeed. We attend, we concentrate, we rummage among elusive memories for a possible clue. We try to note what is relevant in the trains of association which we summon at will. We try to solve problems and puzzles. The solution may elude us but still we may voluntarily get warm to it, as children say in their game. It is useless to object that, very often indeed, we do not know precisely how the trick is worked—how, for instance, we succeed, by trying, to hit upon a really bright idea. The same objection can be brought against all voluntary action and is never sufficient. There is an extensive neuro-muscular chain of causes between the simple volition to kick a stone and the stone's displacement. Modern physiologists know something about it though not very much. The ancient Druids knew much less ; but they also kicked pebbles out of their way.

Similarly we voluntarily put a stop to various types of thinking, relax, turn our thoughts elsewhere, take a thinker's holiday. Those who go to sleep at will voluntarily stop thinking altogether. There is no more doubt about the negative side of this affair than about the positive.

On the other hand many of our thoughts and many trains of our thoughts turn up non-voluntarily, and are neither begun nor retained even by an indolent volition. In the usual case we remember, not because we try to

remember, but without any such effort. The same is true of the negative side. Though sometimes we put a stop to a train of thought at will, deliberately turning our attention away from it, more often the stoppage occurs from some other cause such as boredom or fatigue. While we often deliberately stop *trying* to remember, it is not so easy to stop remembering, and some things are desperately hard to forget whether we try to forget them or don't. And there are obsessions. And usually we can't go to sleep at will. And when we sleep, dreams don't come and go at will. At any rate I believe they don't although personally I can't remember any dream well enough to be able to say with any confidence whether, dreaming, I ever attempt dream-willing or, indeed, ever *try*, properly speaking, to do anything at all.

Nor can it be said that serious thinking is volitional, though trivial thinking need not be. Brooding, very often, does not result from trying to brood ; and brooding may be serious in very many ways. Vigilant and purposeful thinking, it is true, is volitional in a large sense but need not be expressly volitional when it occurs. Thoughts as great as the thinker ever has, as well as bright glittering random ideas, may occur in an idle mood, or when one is shaving as in W. S. Landor's case. They do not mature except on prepared soil, and the preparatory digging may always have required much voluntary effort ; but they are often not directly voluntary.

Accordingly, the answer to the first question is that while much thinking is voluntary, much is not. The answer to the second question, namely, whether a man's thinking can never be coerced by others, is much more intricate.

It is futile to say that a man's thoughts, being necessarily his own thoughts, are therefore immune from outside influence. His headaches also are his own and may

easily be caused by thundery weather or by the drums of an Orange procession. Similarly indeterminism is irrelevant. The question is not about the presence or absence of causes, but about coercion, understood as that term is normally understood in a social and political context, namely intimidation, violence, bribery and the like. All that is proved when it is said that each man does his own thinking is that thinking is what railway tickets are supposed to be, non-transferable. That doesn't help.

Is it true, then, that a man's thoughts cannot be coerced by other men, provided that he keeps mum, although his other voluntary actions can be so coerced? As we saw, such coercion is a matter of degree. Fully stated the assertion must be that a man's thoughts are impervious to all threats, to all bribes and to all propaganda. Could any reasonable mind accept this conclusion? Surely it is plain that evidence may be withheld, misleadingly presented, doctored in all sorts of ways, and that the thinking processes of multitudes of people are duped by other people in just this fashion. What would become of a man's freedom of thought *vis-a-vis* his political government if the government controlled all education, all libraries, all books, all news-print, all broadcasting, all religious services and all public meetings? Men would still think, and, in a sense, each man would think for himself since nobody else could literally do his thinking for him; but how could it be contended without manifest quibbling that his thoughts, even his mum thoughts, are in effect government controlled by the usual means that governments have at their disposal?

"But stop", you may say. "These arguments refer to the ways in which the propagandists present or withhold evidence. That is the propagandist's action, not the hearer's. The propagandist, or the government behind him, may order the hearer to listen, and punish him if he

doesn't. Our argument, however, was about quite a different question, namely, about the question whether *voluntary* thinking could be coerced. To prove your case you would have to show that if a man sets himself to think about what you tell him you can coerce his conclusions."

This reply, as it stands, is inadequate. To listen, i.e. to attend, is a piece of voluntary thinking ; and the statement allowed that the hearer might be coerced into listening. If it be replied that he need only appear to listen, the resources of coercion would not be at an end. The listener, just like a schoolboy, might be coerced into giving some account of what he had heard, so proving that he had not been wholly inattentive. Similarly, he might be coerced into showing that he had not merely heard what was said but had also attempted to follow it up in a train of private reflection. I allow that during the examination he would not be mum ; but the examination would be designed to prove that he had been thinking although, before it, he might have been mum.

Suppose, however, that after all these and all similar pertinent reservations, it still had to be admitted that something adamantine remained. This would be that a man's belief and his appreciation of evidence, such as it is, could not be coerced. What he notices he notices. What he infers he infers ; and, in the end, that is all about it. There can be no coercion *there*.

Such a view would have to allow for the influence of logical training and in various other ways might be less adamantine than it looked. Still it might well appear to have a nucleus of truth very hard to unsettle. I think it has such a nucleus, but for a reason which involves a certain revision of the argument. In a certain important sense, I submit, belief cannot be coerced, the sense in which belief is belief-upon-evidence. The reason is that such believing (and, in the extreme case, knowing for certain)

is not a voluntary action. Thinking, as we have seen, may be voluntary, and *is* voluntary in the sense that we may attend, and may initiate a train of reflection at will ; but the belief-upon-evidence which may attend such thinking processes is not volitional at all. There can be no will to believe-upon-evidence.

Attempts to diminish this nucleus do not seem to me to be very successful. No doubt we can all try to make a case, that is to select and present the favourable evidence only. The intention here is usually to impress other people. When the advocate also impresses himself, the result may be that the evidence he has neglected has become, for him, evidence that does not exist. It is rare for anyone to weigh all the evidence scrupulously. Twelve committee-men out of a baker's dozen seize on a few points which find favour in their eyes and cling to them stubbornly. That, however, is not a proof that they can accept or reject at will such evidence as they believe to be good evidence. Again it is entirely possible for a man to withdraw his attention from evidence which he fears will have dangerous or unsettling implications—which is, let us say, unpopular, revolutionary, inimical to a quiet life. The habit or the policy of treating evidence in this fashion may so affect belief that contrary evidence is wholly disregarded. Similarly, passion and prejudice may induce the most extensive psychic blindness in matters of evidence. All this, however, is no sort of proof that any one is capable of believing *x* to be *y* when he clearly perceives that it isn't, of believing the answer to be five when he sees that it is four. The most he can do in such cases is to take refuge in his fallibility and presume a mistake on his part. He has always that possible loophole. He may even use it regarding the evidence of his senses. But to admit a possible hallucination is never to say that what looks blue really looks yellow. We can look or not

look at will, and may look carelessly or attentively at will, but what we see when we look is not a matter of our will.

Again when it is said, as the Cartesians used to say, that the will may outrun the judgment affirming that to be probable which is barely possible and that to be certain which, at the best, is but likely, the argument has strayed from its proper path. Undeniably men leap to conclusions. Undeniably they are often free from doubt, have full assurance in matters where doubt could very easily and very justly be raised. We are all bad logicians very often. Many of us are very bad logicians indeed. It is quite another thing to say, however, that we can play tricks at will with what we take to be logic, and although many people have said such things it seems impossible to take their word for it.

Once again if it be objected that thousands of people believe what they are *told* to believe, and that at least half the creeds are of this order, the contention is based upon a pun. Certainly we believe a great deal that we are told, believe on hearsay and from testimony, believe what is told us in newspapers and in encyclopædias. In our half-sophisticated credulity we believe too readily on these grounds, but in a very wide field we should have in any case to be told by others what we could not discover for ourselves. Clearly, however, it is one thing to believe what we are told, quite another thing to be *told*, i.e. ordered to believe. The latter, I submit, is an absurd speech. Superficially there may appear to be sense in the command, "Believe, or we will make it hot for you. Believe or the immortals will make it hot for you". If, however, the injunction to believe means more than "Try not to raise difficulties. Try to avoid speculation. Try to be docile", it is an injunction to perform the impossible.

"Free thought" is usually supposed to be the exercise of private judgment without deference to political,

ecclesiastical or other such authority, in short without deference to any authority except the authority of superior knowledge, such superiority being always on its trial, never sacrosanct. Its programme is addressed to the will. Let each man think for himself. Let him avoid lazy acquiescence in the opinions of the big shots, and the big battalions, and the mob. So much of our thinking requires voluntary application of the most strenuous kind that this programme addressed to men's will is of the utmost moment ; and it always makes sense. When it is perceived that belief-upon-evidence, the hard core of all belief, cannot itself be manipulated at will, nothing is discovered that upsets the programme. The search is voluntary ; what is found is not ; and the programme is a programme of search and enquiry. There is no difficulty in this, or so much as paradox, any more than (to repeat) there is either difficulty or paradox in the circumstance that although we look or avoid looking at will, what we see when we look is not another act of will but something that belongs willy-nilly to the looking.

I shall conclude this lecture with some observations upon the connection, if any, between these questions about belief-upon-evidence and determinism.

It is sometimes alleged that logical evidence determines belief in the sense of causing it and that thinking consequently is logic-bound, logic-constrained, logic-compelled and so not "free".

The first allegation is inaccurate. Logical validity is not a cause at all. The belief in it may be a cause, or part-cause of other beliefs, and, through these beliefs may be a cause or part-cause of action which is more than believing (if believing be an action). It is true to say (I submit) that a man's belief in the truth of the premises together with his belief that the conclusion follows is at least a part-cause of his belief in the truth of the

conclusion. Moreover, the point is vital for those who hold, in the similar case of moral obligation that the belief in the rightness of an action is a *vera causa*, is something which does actually move men to act upon moral principle. The validity itself, however, is utterly inert and causes nothing at all. If we say that premises logically determine conclusions we are not talking about *causal* determinants, about agents which do anything.

Inference is a mental action, caused if determinism be true, possibly uncaused if indeterminism be true. Implication is not an action at all, and is usually described as a timeless property which neither belief nor inference could ever be. Indeed what is most marked about both logical implication and logical validity is the utter irrelevance of all causes. A conclusion either follows or doesn't follow, in the logical sense of that word, whoever has it and however the thought of it turned up in anyone's mind. A respectable history is no proof of its truth, and a disreputable history no proof of its falsity. Its canons are logical, not historical and not causal.

A parallel may be suggested. When a motorist believes that the traffic lights have changed from amber to green, he drives on with his car. This belief is the principal operative part-cause of his action. If he were mistaken in it he would still drive on. To say, however, that the greenness of the green light is any sort of operative agent is just nonsense, allowing that the light *is* green if the belief in its greenness is valid.

Accordingly, the sense in which logical validity "determines" belief-upon-evidence has nothing to do with causal determination and so is irrelevant to the controversy whether human thought is cause-free or caused. If anyone chooses to say, as some have done, that the most important type of human "freedom" is action in which beliefs regarding logic and what is morally right are opera-

tive and may be decisive his contention may be very notable although his choice of the term "freedom" to describe it is odd ; but he is not talking about the "action" of logic or of moral logic. There is no such action.

Again the language of constraint and compulsion with regard to belief-upon-evidence, although natural enough and often harmless, is inaccurate. If a man says that the evidence as he sees it compels him to accept such and such a conclusion against his will, forces him into an unwelcome admission, we understand him well enough. He is saying, firstly, that the conclusion is opposed to the bent of his wishes and desires, and secondly, that belief-upon-evidence is not a matter of choice. Both these statements are accurate. The language of constraint and compulsion is not.

## LECTURE IV

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### Of Indeterminism

THE view I intend to uphold in to-day's lecture is that determinism is neither demonstrable nor anything that stands to reason, but that it is desperately hard to deny causes anywhere without denying them everywhere. Being a friend to many causes, with a strong propensity to believe in their existence, I should like to describe myself as an undogmatic determinist.

Determinists, I think, conceive their theory to be inseparable from the venerable maxim *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. That, in its usual and primary interpretation, is a proposition about the origin of substances—the birth of a man, say, or the birth of a star. The assertion is that anything which comes into existence is the outcome of some substance or substances which existed earlier. More generally the maxim states that anything that happens in or to a substance is the outcome, in some continuous process, of the earlier state of the said substance together with its transactions with other substances.

At the present moment the conception of substance seems to be rather out of fashion. Indeed, strenuous attempts have been made to reduce every "substance" to some sort of coagulation of events; but if the primary meaning of "substance" be that which *has* properties (as opposed to the properties themselves) it is clear that events *have* properties and are not themselves properties. A flash of lightning, for example, has the properties of being dazzling and of being brief. Hence I agree with

McTaggart<sup>1</sup> that in this primary sense of "substance" (i.e. what is always subject and never predicate) events are "substances".

In our common practice, however, we make other demands upon "substance", asserting, in particular, that substances always persist, and that they always *do* something, both in the way of keeping themselves going and in the way of affecting other persistent substances. In these additional senses events are *not* substances. For an event may be as brief as you choose; and is usually defined as a closed transaction. It is true that you cannot de-potentiate anything by mere definition. But you can select, and what you select, as in this instance, may exclude definition.

A good many philosophers would say nowadays that there is no difference between a "thing" or a "substance" at any moment and *all* that, as we say, happens in or to it at the moment. Hence they infer that persistent "things" or "substances" are continuous pieces of history containing events in the sense in which lines contain points or, some say, are composed of points. If so, the doctrine that the world is made up of substances would have to mean that events do not float loosely about but are always clotted into what we call "things"—rabbits, cups, electrons or whatever the "things" may be.

Sometimes the term "continuant" is preferred both to "substance" and to "thing". It has the merit of being relatively unpretentious, but may be too modest to be very useful. According to W. E. Johnson's account<sup>2</sup> continuants need not be indestructible. They may last for a shortish time as a man does or for a very long time as the hills do; but the day may come when any particular coagulation of events is dissipated beyond recovery.

<sup>1</sup> E.g. *The Nature of Existence*, I, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> *Logic*, Part I, pp. 199 ff.

In general, the statement, "Nothing comes out of nothing", is taken to mean that if we ask about anything, "Where does it come from?" or "What does it come from?" we can always be sure that there is a positive answer although, of course, we do not always have the luck to find the answer.

This principle, obviously, may be interpreted with very different degrees of stringency. It denies that anything simply pops up without an ancestry, but within the framework of this denial its positive import is elastic.

The most tepid interpretation we could give it would be to say that although everything must have *some* ancestry it may surpass or degenerate from its forbears to such an extent that there is little or no visible resemblance between them. The least tepid sense would be to say that no "new" property can ever rise in anything. Of every detail, however minute, we can always ask, "Where did *it* come from?", and will always have, in theory, an adequate answer. That answer, we may be told, is persistence without qualitative change.

Many, perhaps most, philosophers prefer to be neither very tepid nor very much the reverse. They might argue, for instance, that thinking beings cannot spring from incogitative beings but would hesitate to affirm, say, that a born poet must be born of poets. They might also hedge about "novelty", denying that what is called "novel" is the "mere reshuffling" of unalterable constants varying only in their relations, but hesitating to say much that is positive about the "novelty".

Such half-way measures are difficult to defend on any intelligible principle. If that is "novel" which has never occurred before one would expect to have quite a lot of novelty if there were just reshuffling. Ask any card-player. If what is denied is the emergence of a difference in kind, such philosophers, even if they were not evolu-

tionists, would be very hard pressed indeed when asked to explain the principle on which they decided what was and what was not an ingenerable difference of kind.

Certainly the principle *Ex nihilo nihil* is very tough. Its minimum claim, however, is only a claim to some indefeasible continuity. As soon as the minimum claim is exceeded, difficulties abound.

If determinists say that their principle is simply *Ex nihilo nihil* applied quite ruthlessly to every detail in everything that happens, their ruthlessness is in great danger of undoing them altogether by denying all change or at any rate all change of quality, all change which is more than bare persistence, although their theory is designed to account for the determination of *change*. Causal laws are laws of change, laws of the ways in which things change regularly either internally in imminent causation or by interaction in transient causation. To say that the change is in relations only, not in the (ultimate) substances which are reshuffled, is to evade the problem, using unchangeable substances to explain part of it and leaving the rest unexplained. Where does the change of relation come from? If the determinist says, "From unchanging ultimate relations" there would be no change at all.

/ The principle of determinism is that every event is caused. An event is "anything that happens", and the causal maxim, in vulgar thought, is connected with the substance-maxim by the simple common-sense assumption that whatever happens, happens in some substance or substances. If the truth were that substances are made up of events, substances as such would not be causes. Consequently such statements as "the stone broke the window" or "a man is the author of his own actions" would have, on nicer consideration, to be translated into statements about the irrelevant correlation of events. A continuant would *be* a coagulation of events, and causal

connection, even if it were always within or between the continuing event-clusters that philosophers call "substances", would ultimately be a correlation of events. If Nature consists of events, the meaning of "Every event is caused" must be that every event in Nature is caused by some other event or conjunction of events some of which precede although others, usually called "constant conditions", may be simultaneous with it.

Plainly when we say that every event is caused we do not commonly hold that each single event has just one single cause. On the contrary, we usually believe that most events are the joint result of a conspiracy of part-causes. If so, the maxim "Every event is caused" might be stated thus: "Every event E is such that a certain set of other events, of which one at least precedes the event E and none is subsequent to it, are severally necessary and jointly sufficient to ensure the occurrence of the event E".

So far so good; but we have now to consider the possibility of plurality of causes and of plurality of effects.

In a general way this problem is quite familiar. We often say that several causes may produce death. Reflection, however, tends to make us rather more cautious. "Death" is too general a term for a police surgeon. For him it is death-by-stabbing, death-by-strangulation, and so on. Indeed, for him, any given death-by-stabbing might be narrowed down to death-by-stabbing-by-a-curved-blade-of-such-and-such-dimensions-probably-the-work-of-a-left-handed-male. Proceeding on these lines we might easily arrive at the conclusion that there is no plurality of causes, that only *one* conjunction of part causes could have produced any given specific event.

Similarly, we often speak of plurality of effects, saying that one man's meat is another man's poison and the like. On reflection, however, we should probably add that differences in the digestive systems of the two men are also

relevant, in short are well on the road to denying the possibility of more than a specious plurality of effects.

In other words we tend to be very thorough-going determinists, holding that there are specific causes for each specific detail in every event, and also asserting that *all* causes, strictly interpreted, are uni-determining, and that all effects, strictly interpreted, are determined *ad unum*.

To go so far is to go a very long way, far beyond *Ex nihilo nihil*, far beyond the minimum requirements of a measure of continuity in all that happens. If "cause" and "effect" do have these very stringent implications, it is surely not unreasonable to ask whether the maxim "Every event has a cause" (in the sense of "Every event is predetermined *ad unum* by its sufficient causes") is not a prodigious postulate of which the wise should be chary. Are we really entitled, even if we are cause-men, to deny the possibility of plurality of causes and/or of effects?

As regards plurality of causes it seems to me that we are not so entitled. In matters of practice we frequently admit that several different causes, so far as we can see, might have produced some given effect. We may incline towards the belief that such a multiplicity of causes, if adequately examined, would turn out to be instances of an identical cause, superficially veiled; but we can seldom prove anything like so much. And the thing *might* be ultimate, not merely provisional or superficial. There might, in the last analysis, be alternatively determined effects.

It is not by any means so clear that the conception of multi-determining causes, causes which perform now one office and now another, is tenable except in the sense of being part-causes which, in combination with different other part-causes, have different effects. That is asserted in the case of the alleged *liberum arbitrium indifferentiae*, but is then admitted to be debatable. For the most part

those who believe in multi-determining causes (or say they do) confine themselves to such arguments as that, in the intermixture of effects, incalculable novelties may spring from the intermixture. Such unexpectedness might be due to the number of combinations being too great for most manageable forecasts, and in any case would not apply to the results of repeated intermixture of the same constituents. To speak roughly, the first hybrid mutation may astound but not the second from the same stocks. On the whole I think we should be less confident about the possibility of plurality of effects than about the possibility of plurality of causes.

Still, if even the possibility of plurality of causes were allowed the maxim "Every event is caused" would mean, as a minimum, only that every event has *some* cause, one-or-other of a set of causes, which might be rather narrowly limited in some respects, and much less narrowly limited in other respects. This chastened form of the maxim need not be chastened simply by our ignorance. On the contrary, it might express what is ultimate and therefore metaphysical. If so, the maxim would still involve a form of determinism, but its determinism might be much more elastic than most determinists are prepared to admit. It would seem, however, that the said elasticity refers to plurality of effects, not to plurality of causes, in other words to the same dubious portion of this attempt to reach a more elastic analysis.

Let us pass from the interpretation of the determinist's principle to the question of its truth.

One of Hume's greatest services to philosophy was to show how difficult it was to base either causal laws or the universal principle of causality upon experience, and how negligent it usually was to assert that the causal principle either stood to reason in its own right or could be conclusively demonstrated *a priori*.

Clearly the principle can neither be proved nor refuted by experience. Experience is confined to what has been observed, and there is an obvious *non sequiter* in passing from "every observed event" to "every event". Again, the principle cannot be refuted by experience. It would be so refuted if a single instance of uncaused behaviour could be discovered ; but we can never be certain that there was not a hidden cause.

The fact need not perturb any determinist. Indeed, in asserting it I have been repeating part of the cardinal contention of a most resolute determinist, Sir David Ross, in his *Foundations of Ethics*.

Sir David Ross is a determinist because he holds that we *know* (i.e. know for certain), independently of all experience, that the law of causality "applies to all events as such" (p. 222) ; that no contrary belief is so much as "rational" (p. 220) ; that the precise form of each event must have a precise form to account for it (p. 213) ; and that it is weak and irrational to hold that events could be "determined as to their general nature but undetermined as to their precise form" (p. 212). "There must", he says, "be *something* to account for each event's happening precisely as it does" (p. 212). If it were not so, something would happen "for no reason at all" (p. 221).

These are very confident statements ; but can they stand ?

So far as I can see Sir David Ross simply states (p. 209) that "it is as self-evident as anything could be that the state of anything S, at any moment, must depend on something in S or on something else in the universe".

What is this self-evidence ? It is not analytic. The causal maxim states that every *event* is an *effect*, i.e. is a caused event. The adjective "caused" surely adds something, and adds something vital to the substantive

“event”. But what is “self-evident” must be evident in the thing itself. It is “self”—not “other”—evident. How, then, could “event” *self*-evidently mean “caused event?”

Accordingly the evidence, if it exists, must be synthetic, not analytic. If that were so the meaning would be that anyone who contemplated “event” and “caused event” together would somehow see, by a piece of “insight or reason” prior to all experience, that the two are completely indissoluble. He would see independently of all experience that no event could be either unoriginated or self-originated. I allow that if events had to be regarded as transactions of substances on which they were dependent, all discussions of their origination would be subject to *that* admission. Sir David Ross, however, although he believes in this application of the substance principle, explicitly rests his case entirely upon “events, qualities and relations” (p. 211), disdaining the support, covert or overt, of “substance”.

To sum up: Determinism cannot be established by experience and is not self-evident. If it is demonstrable, produce the axiom from which it can be deduced. I know of none; but *Ex nihilo nihil* seems the most likely candidate for the position. That, however, only asserts continuity; and continuity is not nearly enough for the purpose.

This brief summary describes the first part of the view I am trying to uphold in this lecture. The remainder of the lecture will deal with the extreme difficulty of denying causes anywhere without denying them everywhere, the consequence being that if any causes are allowed to exist determinism is hard to avoid.

An apparently obvious retort is that many modern microphysicists find no difficulty at all in avoiding causal assumptions about individual atoms and in making causal

assumptions when they deal with tides and eclipses. This question certainly deserves fuller discussion than it received in the first lecture, and I shall now try to be less sketchy. As stated, however, the retort is quite inadequate. It is one thing to be able to dispense with causal assumptions for certain purposes, and to employ Occam's razor in that way. It is quite another thing to be justified in denying outright that there are microphysical causes. The second, not the first, is the point now at issue.

In general, there would be something very like a miracle if the supposed prodigious division of Nature into caused and uncaused coincided quite precisely with the division between what human beings observe and what is too minute for them to observe ; and (as before remarked) it is a mere tautology to say that the division between ascertained causes and the rest of Nature does coincide with the gulf between what is and what is not directly verifiable by man's observation. This difficulty is not diminished when it is remembered that the macroscopic (or observable) is composed of the microscopic, i.e. of what is too minute to be observed individually even with the aid of microscopes.

Again, there is no opposition in principle between mass causality and the causal action of the minute constituents which compose the mass. On the contrary, the two are very friendly. But many modish arguments blithely assert that the swarm is caused, its constituents cause free.

What is discussed in these general arguments is our knowledge of aggregate regularity without the knowledge of the regularity of the individual constituents, Tennyson's point in his lines about Nature :

So careful of the type she seems  
So careless of the single life.

Here the language of probability is sometimes used, but

probability-language, in this sense of "probability", makes no difference at all. For "probability" here means class-frequency, i.e. the proportions of aggregates, and has no application except to aggregates. The point is quite simply that we may be able to establish constancies in the behaviour and proportions of aggregates without reference to the known constancy of their constituents.

Such constancy may occur, and frequently does occur, when there is every reason to believe that there *are* causes for the behaviour of the constituents. Because the proportion of deaths by suicide in a given country shows marked constancy during a given period there is no need to infer that such deaths are uncaused, although we may know the fact, e.g. the constant suicide rate, without knowing the life histories of any who have died in that way. More generally, life-insurance companies will be solvent if the deaths of subscribers correspond to the calculated aggregate expectation of life. There is no implication that anyone's death just happens without any cause.

That may be only a proof of non-belligerence between aggregate and constituent causality; but there are strong indications of friendships and comity. The suicide rate among the Japanese increased enormously during the years 1944 and 1945. Does acceptance of the fact forbid the inference that the suicides were caused, and that *bushido* and the Japanese code, understood and followed by individual Japanese, had quite a lot to do with the matter? Life-insurance companies quote different rates for insured persons who pass certain medical tests and for those who do not. Why should the proportions differ among those who pass the doctor and those who don't unless the detected disease is a causal menace to life in the individual case? It is only a matter of probability, you may say. Neither the doctor nor the company knows

that the rejected applicant may not have a long life or that the accepted applicant won't be knocked down by a motor-car within five minutes of leaving the office. Quite so; but such probabilities are estimated on causal grounds and are applicable to the individual case.

In short, a knowledge of aggregate regularity without knowledge of the regularity of the individual constituents is not even the beginning of a proof of the irregularity of the constituents, and the idea of such individual irregularity, if not actually vetoed by the constancy of the aggregate, is seriously embarrassed when we ask why any particular aggregate shows just that constancy and no other, or will continue to do so.

For the most part, at least, arguments which profess to favour indeterminism in microphysics rest on our ignorance of the individual performance of "microscopic" entities, not on positive anti-causal grounds. The Heisenberg "principle of uncertainty", for instance, is that, at least in the present state of our technique of measurement (especially when the body examined is too small for the wave-length of the illuminant), there is a certain opposition between momentum and position, the former becoming, within narrow limits, less exact as the latter becomes more exact, and conversely. This need not be more than an affair of measurement or, in the extreme case, of immeasurableness.

There are other arguments, however. To quote from Eddington, "Suppose that we wish to discover the composition of a certain salt. We put it in a test tube, apply various chemicals to it, and finally reach the conclusion that it *was* silver nitrate. It is *not* silver nitrate after our treatment of it."<sup>1</sup>

This may show that chemists and physicists, instead of

<sup>1</sup> Aristotelian Society Supplementary, Vol. X, *Indeterminism, Formalism and Value*, p. 168.

inferring from data precisely observed, very frequently argue from presumptions about the data. If so, it is reasonable to say that evidence alleged to support determinism is pretty often cooked. In general, however, the admission would not seem to throw much light upon the logic of this debate. It would be a salutary warning against over-reliance upon the precision of the ascertained data ; but would be irrelevant where the data were precise.

What Eddington and many others appear to be arguing, however, is not merely that our observation of Nature is frequently less precise than we say it is, but that Nature itself is imprecise or indeterminate. That is a new argument and its relations to indeterminism need careful investigation. So let us first examine the contention more generally.

As we saw, Sir David Ross said much about the *precise* form of every event, its precision "in every detail". What is a detail ? It must be something specifiable, and it might be argued that all our attempts at complete precision of specification are too general to succeed, if, indeed, there is such a thing as an absolutely last specification. In any case there may reasonably be doubts in very many instances. Are there, for example, utterly *last* shades of red ? Any given observer may easily come across shades of red between which he is unable to discriminate. Some of his neighbours, however, may be able to discriminate where he cannot ; yet in their cases also it frequently happens that although they cannot discriminate between shade *a* and shade *b*, or between shade *b* and shade *c*, they can readily discriminate between shade *a* and shade *c*.

In other words, there is need for caution in the application of the Law of Excluded Middle. We all know the danger of choosing any predicate, however vague, and stating truculently that it must either hold or not hold of

any subject you please. What may further be maintained with at least a certain plausibility is that human thought is itself condemned to a certain vagueness, at any rate in many regions usually unsuspected.

Supposing this to be so, there would still be a huge gap between the imprecision of our attempts to specify natural events "in every detail", and the doctrine that Nature herself was imprecise, vague, indeterminate. The second is what Heisenberg, Eddington and others seem to maintain. So let us turn to the connection, if any, between this doctrine of Nature's indeterminateness and the doctrine of indeterminism.

The two doctrines are quite distinct. To say that an event is determinate is to say that it is just what it is. To say that an event is *determined* (more accurately pre-determined) is to say that its occurrence is the outcome of other earlier events which are its causes. If an event popped up without any causes most of us believe that it would still be what it is, that determinate event.

Caused or not it is just itself. There is no occasion for a quarrel here between determinists and their opponents. Admitting that there are difficulties about the completeness of our specifications of what anything is, I cannot see that there is any valid reason for denying the determinateness of every event. What was, was precisely what it was ; what is, is precisely what it is ; what will be, will be precisely what it will be.

To say, however, that an event will be what it will be when it occurs need not imply that its future occurrence was fixed in advance, that before it occurred there was something which settled what it would be. Hence, notwithstanding the complete determinateness of every event *when* it occurs it would be consistent to hold, not simply that we have to await the event before knowing for certain what it determinately is, but also that the outcome would

*be* indeterminate until, later, the event actually occurred. What will be, will be ; but when it occurs, not necessarily before it occurs.

Queen Anne died on the 1st of August, 1714. From that date onwards she was very definitely dead. Her death was fixed for ever with no "either-or" about it. The admission, however, does not imply that her death on the 1st of August, 1714, was fixed on the 31st of July, 1714, or on any earlier day.

It is rather difficult to express this in English since "is" and "was" and other such verbs, even if they are used tenselessly as in "2 and 3 is 5" are apt to suggest tense. So let us say "The date of Queen Anne's death — August 1, 1714". The further explanation then would be that this statement became true on August 1, 1714, and was true ever after but was not true on July 31, 1714, or earlier, not simply because nobody knew it on the 31st of July of that year, but metaphysically because, on that date there was (tenselessly) no such event to be known. Instead of saying with many logicians, "Once true, always true", we should in the case of all temporal truths substitute the more accurate statement, "Once true, ever after true".

The view, of course, would apply to all events, to all existence. But why shouldn't it? Let all existence be completely determinate. What we call the future has not come into existence. What has not come into existence is non-existent whether "is" be read as tensed or as untensed. The fact that the existent is determinate does not tell us anything at all about the non-existent. It is not a question of our ignorance or uncertainty about the future, although one of its implications would be that we should be wrong in some of the assertions we often make about the future. The question is about the nature of temporal process. We have no right to fix in thought

what is not fixed in reality. The suggestion is that *nothing* existent is fixed before it occurs.

This metaphysical account of temporal process seems to me to be based upon correct assertions and to give a more credible account of temporal process than most others. Temporal process is always a process of becoming, of coming-to-be coming into existence. Again, this account of temporal process seems to tally with what is sometimes called "Time's Arrow", i.e. with the apparent fact that earlier-to-later is not merely the asymmetrical converse of later-to-earlier, but also is Time's proper direction, the present being always a renewal and the past always dead. It may also tally with certain features of our experience of life in time and with Bergson's *durée*. We are going *on*. There is an inalienable freshness in our coming-to-be, even when life is tedious and repetitive. For what it is worth, we might add the reflection that if this piece of metaphysics were accurate there would be an explanation of what otherwise might seem to be wholly mysterious brute force. We observe the present and remember the past, and do not merely infer either. With the exception of a handful of clairvoyants and of Mr. J. W. Dunne, we do not claim any such power regarding the future. Instead we surmise it by conjectural inference.

What has all this to do with determinism?

On the face of it, it appears to deny the form of determinism which asserts that every event is predetermined by earlier events to become just what it does become, that is, is pre-determined *ad unum*. Superficially it might not appear similarly to deny the form of determinism which allows the possibility of plurality of causes and/or of effects. Since, however, what it actually denies is that what we call future events are anything at all, these appearances are deceptive. There is no point in talking about the fixity of non-entities, whether *ad unum* or not.

As regards what *has* come into existence the theory has nothing to say. If determinists affirm that all events, up to the present, have been caused, that is, have been instances of uniformities of sequence, the doctrine of the non-existence of the future before it occurs (to use an Irish bull) cannot offer any objection. The theory applies to the future only and not to what is later in any temporal transition which has actually occurred.

Thus although the theory may appear to deny causes everywhere, and therefore anywhere, it does not really do so. It merely declines to say anything at all about what it asserts to be non-entity. Anyone who says that up to the present many events have been caused, that he has certain reasons for believing that all events have been caused, and that he expects that the future will resemble the past in this important way just as confidently as he expects that there will be a future at all, is saying something which this metaphysical theory cannot touch.

Our expectation that the future will resemble the past may be a gamble ; but if the law of universal causation be neither self-evident, nor demonstrable *a priori* nor capable of being proved by experience, it is a gamble any way. Up to the present the causal gamble has come off in a crowd of instances. The tides on the Mersey during the year 1930, let us say, were calculated before that year and they behaved in accordance with the calculations. The calculations presupposed that what was then the future would resemble the past, that prospectively, the moon could be assumed not to disintegrate at the material time and the like. Nobody then could *foreknow* these things ; but, assuming them, many could predict. Events tallied with the predictions. What more would you have ? Certainly our knowledge of the past causes of past tides is much more accurate than our knowledge of the causes of many other past events, but the multipli-

cation of the discoveries which led to a general disbelief in objective contingency anywhere in the world were undoubtedly impressive.

Indeed I for my part would be willing to argue the case on the basis of what *has* occurred, accepting the limitation that, as regards the future, we have to say that the expectation that "the future will resemble the past" pertains to faith and not to sight. In the past there have been uniformities of mere persistence, such as the constancy of atomic weight, and there have been uniformities of change, that is, of change which is not mere persistence. The latter are what we call causal laws, the antecedents in the uniformities of change being "causes". The idea that uniformities of mere persistence are self-explanatory and ultimately the basis of all the uniformity which has hitherto occurred in Nature seems to me to be wholly mistaken. There may have been much immanent causality, that is to say a uniformity of change which is not mere persistence within a single substance. More usually, however, transient causality has been the pattern of Nature's changes. In the past we have discovered many of these uniformities of change. We have not discovered that they are all-pervasive in Nature in the sense that every detail in every event that has ever occurred has been shown to be an instance of a uniformity of change; but we have never discovered a contrary instance *for certain*, and within the range of our observation we have rightly become increasingly suspicious of objective contingency at any time in the past and present. In our search for causes it has never been reasonable to stop the search on the ground that, since there are no causes in the case, it is futile to look for them.

In saying these things about the past course of natural events I am acutely aware that in some ways I ought to say more, and in other ways would be expected to say more.

Obviously, these very general statements give no sort of picture of the complexity of the search for causes even when, in common life, the searcher is among the plainest of plain men, to say nothing of the prodigious achievements of men of science in the face of prodigious difficulties. They do not, for instance, distinguish between derivative and fundamental uniformities of change and would include the uniform sequence of day into night and of night into day as readily as any other. Of all that, and of much more to a similar effect, I shall only say that the subject requires a treatise upon scientific method, and that, even if I were one of the few who are capable of contributing usefully to that department of knowledge, I could not reasonably be expected to make the attempt in the present course of lectures.

Some other complaints need not be equally justified. Thus it may be complained that, allowing a cause to be an antecedent in a uniformity of change which is more than mere persistence, we have there only the beginning not the end of the story ; and the complaint may be elaborated in various ways, some of them very familiar. A cause, it is said, does not merely precede its effect uniformly. According to some philosophers it logically entails its effect ; according to other philosophers it *effects* its effect, such efficacy, perhaps, being exhibited in human volition more clearly than anywhere else ; according to most philosophers it necessitates its effect. Given the cause, the effect *must* occur.

While these complaints, or some of them, may be better justified than I think they are, I am not disposed to accept them. There have been many attempts to show either that causal sequence in general is *eo ipso* a logical sequence or in particular that this or that causal law states a logical implication. I am in very good company in maintaining that all such attempts have failed, having invariably

begged the question. In my opinion Hume settled them very effectively<sup>1</sup> though Kant has often been said to have "answered" him. Regarding the supposed efficacy of volition, I am again in very good company in holding that the alleged efficacy is a myth, that neither before nor after experience is it clear to anyone that his ability to wag his finger at will and his inability to wag his ears at will are anything more than uniformities of sequence discovered in the past and expected for whatever future we may have. As for necessitation I have argued so often and so elaborately about constraint, compulsion and the like that repetition would be very nearly unpardonable here. The mandatory "must", I believe, is addressed to *us*, not to the facts ; and rather metaphorically at that. We ought to accept uniformities of change in all that has come into being ; and the reason why we ought to accept these uniformities of change, this constancy in sequence, is just that the uniformities exist.

Some of the complaints, if they were valid, would abolish any relevant difference between what has occurred and the future. If causality were a logical implication it might be held to be timeless, in which case it would be just as absurd to say that a cause entailed its effect yesterday but might not entail it to-morrow, as to say that two and two made four yesterday but might make four and a half to-morrow and similarly of the "must" of necessitation. This consequence, however, so far from being welcome, would be a source of acute embarrassment if the view of temporal process I attempted to describe and defend in this lecture were anywhere near the truth.

Such is my defence of undogmatic determinism. The pattern of natural events, up to the present, has been a pattern in which uniformities of change predominated. The growth of natural knowledge until very recently was

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise*, Bk. I, Pt. III, § iii.

just what it said it was, a progressive vindication of the law of universal causation, indemonstrable, no doubt, and also incomplete in its survey, but a programme which never let anyone down, an investment whose dividends continuously increased. Recent attempts to prove objective contingency in microphysics, *prove* nothing of the kind, though they may direct us to look first to aggregates when we look for causes.

The denial of causes *everywhere* seems to me to be monstrous. Hitherto, however, my attempt to show that it was desperately hard to deny them anywhere unless they were denied everywhere has not been a logical gem. It amounted to a general presumption, partially confirmed by the advances of science, together with an attempt at a reasoned denial of the view that in microphysics there must be a reserved area of objective contingency. An adequate discussion of the question would have to deal with all the regions in which there was a *prima facie* case for objective contingency, biological, psychological or whatever the region might be.

I shall not attempt an exhaustive review of this kind, and to that extent must frankly admit my negligence. The most likely regions in which there might seem to be a case for objective contingency, however, appear, microphysics apart, to be the human mind and human action. I shall say something about some of these now, omitting ethical arguments which will be the subject of the next lecture.

The most important such region is human choice itself. What the more wary determinists aver is that choice pre-determines its outcome but that choice itself is pre-determined. If, as is usual, they deny the possibility of plurality of causes and/or of effects they would further maintain that choice is uni-determined to a single inevitable decision with a single inevitable outcome. We may discuss the view in this supposedly most rigorous sense.

Superficially at least there is no opposition at all between the statement that choice occurs and the statement that when it occurs it is caused. Indeed most indeterminists would go some little way towards admitting that much choice was part-caused. They would often say, for instance, that the choice proceeds from and expresses the personality of the chooser who is its author, in other words they come very near to saying that choice is an incident in a process of immanent causality. Some would admit the operation of antecedent motives, although they might explain, in Leibniz's phrase, that such motives "incline without necessitating". Some would be very loth to admit that if choice be a "first cause", an unoriginated originator, there must somehow be radical discontinuity somewhere whenever choice occurs. A few speak about "little doses of free will", as if free will were a sort of non-natural ginger which could be sprinkled into natural human action, though without explaining why the non-natural ingredient should not have a perfectly good non-natural cause.

The main point, I think, is as follows : Indeterminists say that if choice were pre-determined *ad unum* it would not *be* choice at all. It would be inevitable, not optional. They might be prepared to concede to their opponents that *if* we chose to perform we would perform and that *if* we chose to forbear we would forbear. They might also be prepared to concede that these hypothetical statements had no application outside human and animal volition where alone choice occurs. What they would deny is that an inevitable choice is, properly speaking, choice at all. Relatively to the chooser's or to anyone else's knowledge it might seem to be so, but it would not really be so.

I have puzzled over this problem for many years and foresee no prospect of finding it less puzzling for many more years if I have them. The solution may be quite

simple, but, simple or not, it has escaped me. I have every disposition to believe that what we call choice is caused. I have a very strong disposition to deny that it is a "first cause" of which an integrated developing self is not the author by immanent causality. But if it be said that, if so, what is called choice is misnamed I confess to dubiety and am not satisfied that the mere avoidance of the word "choice" and the substitution, say, of the word "decision" would be so much as honest.

As it seems to me the apparent flat opposition between what is inevitable and what is optional results from neglecting the possibility that, in what is said to be optional, the choice itself is caused. If so, the flat opposition would not exist. But I am not satisfied that this simple solution suffices.

I shall end this lecture with some rather scattered remarks about the human will.

The phrase "to incline without necessitating" does not seem to me to mean more than "to be a part-cause though not the complete cause", and to be inaccurate even then since a part-cause without the other parts may be inert and so not incline at all. The phrase, however, may be supposed to describe loosely but not unintelligibly the plight of men and women with regard to what we call "motives".

Consider what we call temptation. There it is natural to say, "I am strongly, perhaps furiously inclined to yield, but, if I made a special effort, I would not yield and I *could* make the effort".

Consider again a decision between alternatives very nearly in equipoise, both favourable but conjointly impossible. We might then say that both alternatives inclined, but that only one could be chosen.

So let us examine the sense in which "motives" are causes. "I assume", says Sir David Ross, "that every desire

must at any one moment be of a perfectly definite intensity, and that all desires must be comparable on a single scale of intensity".<sup>1</sup> So a prominent determinist. Similarly, Dr. Broad (who, however, sits loose to determinism) speaks of "the desire to do A being present with the requisite strength and persistence".<sup>2</sup>

Taking "desire" to mean "that which moves us"—a technical sense of the word which puts a considerable strain upon its usual meaning—the clear implication of all such statements is that every "desire" at every moment has a certain definite momentum in the person who has it, the outcome being a continuation of the said momentum.

I am not much impressed by the common libertarian argument that anyone who says that the strongest motive prevails is begging the question, since he has to await the event in order to discover what *was* the strongest motive. If we assume that a motive always has a definite momentum it would be quite legitimate to infer the momentum from the later effect. On the other hand, the objection may do excellent service by insisting that the strength of motives is imputed rather than observed, and that there may be peculiarities about "motives" which render the imputation dubious.

Firstly, states of mind, unlike everything else, may be vague and confused, having one leg in a slippery present and another in a watery future. If so, it seems odd to speak so confidently about the "perfectly definite intensity" of vague desires. A desire is defined both by its future aim, which may be vague, and by its present uneasiness (which, in some sense is perfectly definite). There may be question-begging psycho-physics in applying the same term to both features or in ignoring the former.

<sup>1</sup> *Foundations of Ethics*, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> *Determinism, Indeterminism and Libertarianism*, pp. 38-39.

Secondly, and reverting to cases of temptation and the balancing of apparently equal prospects, we should have to allow that "the self" in its decisions seems to act very often as judge or arbiter rather than as the meeting-point of persistent forces. Even if men are seldom impartial judges it would be preposterous to hold that they never act as arbiters of their own conduct. Consequently such situations would be misdescribed if the judge's decision were said to be simply his recognition that desire  $x$  with its allies and prospects was stronger in him than desire  $y$  with its allies and prospects.

In so far as the decision is based upon logical evidence and the scrutiny of values, it might seem to be in a new orbit, totally different from the orbit of desires "with a perfectly definite intensity". The reply would be that the doctrine of the perfectly definite intensity of desires in no way assumes that the psycho-physics of desires is "mechanical" or should be understood in any sense that neglects reflection, logic and conscience. The judge desires to be straight and clear, and these desires, in their "perfectly definite intensity", prevail when he is impartial.

I think the reply is correct. Nevertheless the relation of logic-bent and righteousness-bent desires to the simpler desires upon which they sit in judgment is undeniably complicated. If the "strength of motive" theory relied exclusively upon uncritical desires it would be negligent.

Thirdly, it is clear that the strength of motives after a decision has been reached bears no uniform relation to their strength before the decision was reached. A strong-willed man, after coming to a decision, puts the rejected candidates out of his mind. In the relevant sense they do not attract him any longer although most of their advantages remain what they were. The weak-willed man reverts to them and tends to go back upon his decision.

A not infrequent case occurs in which the attraction of the rejected candidates continues to be felt with little if any appreciable diminution but since the verdict has gone against them—well, that's that.

The fact, I daresay, has physical and other analogues, and need not be construed as a mystery. By itself it is a reminder that the strength of a motive at any one moment in any one person may be very different indeed in the same person at the next moment. In so far, however, as anyone supposes that the strength of a motive is a constant factor persisting unchanged in some parallelogram of psychological forces he is making enormous assumptions very hard to justify.

The argument concerning plurality of causes is even weaker than is here stated. If several causes, e.g.  $M_1$ ,  $M_2$ , etc., would yield precisely and numerically the same effect,  $M_1$ ,  $M_2$ , etc., then the retrospective discovery of causes would be effected but, by hypothesis, each such cause would produce the same effect and so be impervious to criticism on this account.

## LECTURE V

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### Determinism and Morals

MANY moralists, many great moralists, have been determinists. Like their fellows they were fallible ; but it would be inept, or worse, to suggest that, in comparison with their opponents they were deficient in sincerity, in profundity, in moral fervour, in love and admiration for human greatness, in the clearness and, if need were, in the austerity of their conception of moral duty. To say such things about Spinoza, or about Jonathan Edwards, or about the greater Stoicks is just to betray ignorance.

On the whole, however, the majority of modern European moralists have not been determinists and the general opinion in modern Europe, especially among the laity, appears to be that morality, in the main, is threatened wherever free will is threatened and that free will implies indeterminism of the will if indeed it is not precisely the same thing. Such views, indeed, are so frequently taken for granted that, in a distressingly high proportion of cases, a little rhetoric, preferably highly coloured, is supposed to be all that the occasion requires. Determinists (we are told), if they are not actually evil themselves, are banded against the angels. Similarly, every attempt to disclaim determinism anywhere receives rounds of applause from the back benches of moralism. If contemporary microphysicists look askance at the determinism of their fathers there is much clapping of hands.

The naughty scientists have surrendered one of their naughtiest notions, have challenged the spectre of a scientifically determined universe and so have encouraged the free heart of a freeman to beat freely without interference from his clear head.

Since many of the good new scientists, as well as many of the naughty old ones, share just these preconceptions, there is some excuse for the celebrations. But not nearly enough. Drums will not win the fight, as a simple reminder of some of the major ambiguities in our use of the term "freedom" should suffice to show. For the most part, at least, the freedom which is acclaimed as being essential to morals is a species of high-grade autonomy of knowledgeable self-direction and self-control in which a man's conscience may play its conscientious leading part; and autonomy need not be cause-free. In the fundamental negative sense of freedom, it is true, such self-government, in so far as it is not other-government, is other-free. Self-determination is not other-determination. In many contexts again the other-determination is understood to mean determination by other men; and we may admit that in certain contexts it may be legitimate to call human behaviour other-determined if circumstances are such that our knowledge and conscience are clean out of the picture. None of these negative applications of the conception of freedom implies, however, that anything in the world is cause-free, that self-determination is not a process of immanent causality, that knowledgeable willing is pure ungenerated spontaneity. But that is just what is argued by indeterminists in their bouts with determinists. We may be stirred by the sentiment in Mr. Auden's line :

"Knowledge no use to us whose wrists enjoy the chafing leash" but need not infer that either our feelings of "freedom" or our belief in personal responsibility and initiative requires indeterminism. If, in the end, there

should prove to be such a logical requirement it does not lie upon the surface and has to be sought by much more arduous methods. To be sure, babes may babble what is true. But not impressively.

Determinists often complain that their opponents confuse fatalism with determinism. They allow that fatalism (as that term is currently understood) would wreck morality ; but they strenuously affirm that clear-headed determinists are *not* fatalists, indeed that they repudiate fatalism with entire consistency and with the most scrupulous regard for moral and for other relevant facts, as heartily and as thoroughly as anyone could. This assertion promises as good an approach as any to the problems of the present lecture.

When a man avows himself a fatalist he may mean several different things. Those who say during a great war, " We are all fatalists now ", usually mean little more than that in war, though not in peace, nearly all long-term planning and a great many short-term familiar expedients are inappropriate. This man's life and that man's life are subject to so many incalculable accidents that prudent effort is as good as useless and sheer luck, from the individual's point of view, is all there is to it. This colloquial account of a colloquial attitude, though exaggerated, is not without its point, and has a certain relevance to our theme even if, in many ways, Fate and sheer luck are sharply opposed. The extreme view, I suppose, would be that no human being ever does anything at all in any sense whatever. He is less than a leaf in November ; for even a withered leaf reacts, is a partner with the rain in becoming sodden, a partner with the gale in its scurrying. Between these extremes there are intermediates tedious to enumerate, including the odd opinion that fatalism refers only to a man's death. This is mortuary fatalism. If a man's number is up he will die

whether he drinks milk or liquid arsenic ; if not he will live whatever he does.

The species of fatalism which, determinists say, is often confused with determinism is the doctrine that human volitions have no effect at all on anything so that it is all one whether a man tries to do anything or tries not to do it or doesn't try at all. In sharp opposition to this doctrine many determinists emphatically affirm that human volitions *are* efficacious, just as they seem to be, but that, like other efficacious things, they are also caused. Then philosophers add, very understandably, that the difference between their determinism and the type of fatalism described above is so very plain as to leave no excuse for confusion.

Allowing, at least for the moment, that the distinction between such determinism and fatalism is all that these determinists say it is, we should still as moralists raise the prior question whether *fatalism* (of the type described above) would wreck all morality.

Surely (it may be said) liars are liars whether or not they are fated to become liars ; and lying is wrong. Adultery is wrong whether or not the adulterers are fated to become adulterers. Bad faith is bad faith, whether fated or not.

This may seem crystal clear, but the answer is not very difficult. A liar is not merely a man who makes false statements which lead or may lead to various calamities. If that were all it would not matter whether his lies were fated or not. The fated falsehoods would be falsehoods and would work their mischief. But a lie is a falsehood made with intent to deceive and the wickedness of it lies largely in its deceitful intent. Even if certain moralists overstress the wickedness of the intent and understress the mischief that liars set afoot, a total omission of the intent would result in the discussion not being about lying at all.

That is precisely what would happen if fatalism, in the sense described above, were accepted. The fatalists would say that the volition, that is, the enacted intent, played no part at all in the lie. It would be present—for we can observe it—but would have all the irrelevance of the colour of a book to its contents. Present, it would be preternaturally idle describing nothing constitutive in the situation. In other words fatalism really would *demoralise* the affair.

The example I have given refers to the guilt, evil and wickedness of a voluntary action and shows that if such an action were fated irrespective of all volition it would not be the action that moralists condemn. That, however, is not the end of this business. It would be the end of it if morality were concerned only and altogether with willed action. That is just what many moralists would say, very likely correctly, about right and wrong ; but these same moralists, like many others, also hold that moral enquiries have to deal with much in moral character which, directly at least, is non-volitional. There is an ethics of the agent as well as an ethics of his willed action, an ethics, that is to say, of the man ; and the man is much more than the totality of his willed actions. When we think of a *good* man in the moral way, that is, of a saint, we think of much more than his righteousness, and of very much more than his righteousness if that term, in its turn, be understood to mean the succession of right actions voluntarily performed by him. We think of his serenity, of the sweetness of his disposition, of the kindness and charity of him, of his purity, of his compassion, of his generosity. From these and similar qualities good works do normally proceed. Many of them are willed and are right ; but the saint's unwilled moral goodness is very near the top of what we think about him.

Indeed a strong array of moralists are prepared to

affirm with emphasis that there is a large non-volitional region of ethics, including, they say, all a man's emotions. For emotions cannot be summoned at will, and, for the most part, cannot be quashed at will either.

If so, a very large part of a man's moral make-up would be extra-volitional. This extra-volitional region would include love of one's neighbour as distinguished from voluntary actions intended for the neighbour's benefit, generosity as contrasted with voluntary almsgiving and the like, chastity as opposed to mere abstention from fornication—in short a wide and pleasant meadow of sweet and tender virtue. Similarly, there would be an extensive jungle of extra-volitional evil, of hatred, malice and uncleanness.

How could fate affect these regions? Fatalism (we are assuming) refers to that in a man which is fated irrespective of his volitions. What is extra-volitional in human moral character is just that part of a man's being. Indeed the statement is tautologous. What difference could there be if extra-volitional virtue or vice were, on the one hand, fated or, on the other hand, not fated? The virtue would still be gracious. The vice would still be foul. Colloquially and rather loosely, though not unintelligibly, we often say that so and so is a born saint, a born devil, a born scallywag, never dreaming that, in saying so, we are saying or suggesting that the born saint is not a saint, the born devil not a devil, the born scallywag not a scallywag; and never dreaming, either, that the saint, devil, or scallywag is self-begotten. Even Josiah Bounderby in *Hard Times*, however absurdly he exaggerated his self-made manhood, did not venture on such a suggestion.

On these assumptions why should a fatalist not affirm, clear-headedly and emphatically, "Blessed are the meek. Blessed are they who love their kind. Blessed are the patient, the imperturbable, the courageous, the loyal.

Blessed are all who are finely touched to fine issues" ? Similarly why should a fatalist not affirm, "Cursed are the haughty. Cursed are the morose. Cursed are the querulous, the unbalanced, the cowardly, the frigid. Cursed are all who are gross and base" ? And what are the grounds for holding that such a fatalist is either wrecking morality or confusing the moral with the non-moral ?

The answer is that there is no reason. Non-voluntary beauty is still beauty without being willed. Similarly, unwilled purity would still be saintly and good. The mere denial that anything is willed, it is true, is not an assertion that it is fated, although it is one of the implications of the latter in the sense we are now considering ; but there is no ground for supposing that whatever more be meant by "being fated" than by "not being willed" makes the slightest difference.

These reflections, surely, have a serious pertinence for moral theory and should at least delay sweeping, tumultuous assertions to the effect that morality and fatalism are mortal foes in every possible respect. It is quite another thing, however, to accept them without reservations. What arouses our strongest misgivings regarding them, I think, is the trenchancy of the division proclaimed between the non-voluntary virtues of an agent and the rightness of his voluntary acts. Let it be granted that a man's emotions are seldom summoned at will and are not very often stilled at will. It does not follow that the man has no sort of voluntary control over them, cannot feed them or starve them, cannot tackle them at all by any voluntary means however slow and however indirect. By the almost unanimous testimony of the greater moralists quite the contrary is the case. One of our principal tasks as moral agents is to cleanse, to direct and, if necessary, to subdue our passions.

Indeed many moralists would say, with much show of reason and sound sense, that courage, kindness and generous impulses, however gracious they may be when considered in themselves alone, are not, properly speaking, *moral* virtues until they are moralised, that is to say, among other things, until they are integrated with the volitional part of a morally responsible man. They are moralisable easily and amicably but they are not, as such, moral, however admirable they may be in themselves. They are gladly praised but not as moral qualities.

Such doctrines may often have been exaggerated, particularly perhaps by Kant and the Stoics. Modern psychologists as well as many older writers may have shown that volition, even when not regarded as a rigorous task-master nearly all the time, has less mastery, and a much less economic mastery than rationalists in morals used to take for granted. On the whole, however, the idea of a wide domain of human virtue and vice in which volition plays no part at all shows insufficient fidelity to the facts.

In so far as the division between volition and what is extra-volitional is not complete, the view that fatalism wrecks the morality of right and wrong, but does not so much as damage extra-volitional virtue and vice, cannot be sustained ; and it could never be a simple matter to say with confidence, in any part of the field of morals, that volition could be neglected because its contribution was negligible. For present purposes it is enough to point this out. Perhaps I should also say however, on the lines of the third lecture and of other parts of this series, that on the whole and in spite of exaggerations rightly censurable, the tradition which makes volition central in morals is in my opinion substantially correct. If so, the contention that fatalism ruins morality but that determinism need not do so has all the importance that the

more careful among philosophical determinists ascribe to it, and I shall proceed on that assumption for the remainder of this lecture.

Since it is convenient to be able to refer concisely to the distinction between the determinists who accept the efficacy of volitions and the determinists who do not accept it, we had better allow the reasonableness of Mrs. Gamp's entreaty, " Give it a name, I beg ". So for the rest of this lecture I shall call determinists of the former type " voluntaristic determinists ". Our problem accordingly is whether voluntaristic determinism stands in any sort of opposition, subtle or crude, to adequate moral principle.

Serious ethical discussion of this question is about the nature of moral responsibility to which we may now address ourselves. There is little if anything in the general problem which escapes that apparently more special problem. Voluntaristic determinists maintain, negatively, that indeterminism is irresponsibility ; but they are not content with exposing the bankruptcy of the opposition. They attempt to show positively and in detail that moral responsibility means voluntary moral self-determination, and that such self-determination is a species of determinism which supplies the only possible basis both for the ordinary and authentic moral consciousness and for its philosophical vindication.

Let us examine this positive contention.

What is central is the analysis of morally responsible action in the sense of " responsibility " in which, as Miss Stebbing says,<sup>1</sup> " responsible for " is more fundamental than " responsible to ". According to voluntaristic determinists a responsible moral agent is the author of the deed for which he is responsible though not in a causeless way. The deed is *his* not necessarily in the sense that he is its sole cause in a purely immanent process but that he is

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy and the Physicists*, p. 225.

the principal cause of it. Substantially, a responsible action is self-caused not other-caused, that is to say its dominant cause is generated from antecedents within the agent. (Of course the action is not self-caused in the fantastic sense that the action causes itself, i.e. as Hume said, exists before it exists.) Moreover, moral responsibility implies more than mere agency or authorship. It is the agency or authorship of a moral being. That, in its turn is intended to assert that the agent is knowledgeable in at least two relevant ways. The first is that he knows (pretty well) what he is about and has a fairly serviceable knowledge of the consequences of what he is doing. The second is that he has at least an appreciable measure of insight into the goodness or badness and/or into the rightness or wrongness of what he is about to do.

According to voluntaristic determinists every feature of this analysis is in harmony with determinism and out of harmony with any other view.

Plainly self-determination does not *mean* uncaused determination. According to voluntaristic determinists it has all the marks of being caused. It grows out of causally relevant antecedents in a continuous intelligible history, in a history which we have every reason to believe to be causally explicable, although in the obscurity of human hearts and of many human situations troops of cause-factors are hidden from the agent himself as well as from his friends and detractors.

So, too, of the knowledge asserted in the analysis, and of the beliefs which, according to the analysis, are operative in responsible moral conduct. Voluntaristic determinists not only admit but also insist upon the factual and evaluative knowledge that moral beings must have if their action is to be moral. They admit and insist that a moral agent looks before and after, weighs the pros and cons, uses and acknowledges his conscience, perpends and is

loyal to moral principles—or the reverse if his action be blameworthy. But all this, they say, is consistent with and inexplicable without a relevant causal history. Whence do we obtain the factual knowledge? Surely, by personal experience and by hearsay. Is either of these uncaused? Who in the world ever thought that education, including self-education, was not a causal process? And if there be anything instinctive or innate in our factual knowledge, why should that be uncaused? Similarly of our knowledge of good and evil, right and wrong. Even if you say (which seems simple-minded) that precept and example and the training of mothers and of clergymen have little or nothing to do with it, and that, in the last analysis, a man's appreciation of good and bad, and his sense of duty, are immitigably his own, you have still every reason for believing and no reason for denying that they spring from causes within the man himself.

So, too, of volitions. According to voluntaristic determinists our volitions do actually play the preponderant part in morally responsible action that common sense and English law and other such authorities ascribe to them. It is here that voluntaristic determinists renounce the vain errors of the fatalists. They accept (they say) all the sensible claims that can be made in favour of the "freedom" of the human will conceding to libertarians every tittle that any clear-headed libertarian ever asked. They agree that a man who wills, wills freely. His volitions are the head and front of his self-determination and, as regards the pith of the matter, are free from such other-determination as impedes them from making the critical difference.

Voluntaristic determinists also concede and maintain that a moral agent would have acted differently had he chosen differently, and that there *are* matters in which choice is effective. Some would even say, like Mr.

“ Hobart ” in *Mind*,<sup>1</sup> that the agent could have chosen differently, though this, I fear, amounts only to saying nothing outside the agent prevented him from doing so, and that we do not know enough about internal obstacles to be able to say very much about them.

In short, our volitions, according to voluntaristic determinists, have the same background in a continuous personal causal history as the knowledge on which they draw. A volition springs from personal antecedents and implements them in its own volitional way. It betrays no rupture of continuity but is firmly anchored in the continuing self. It has all the marks of being caused.

The negative arguments advanced by voluntaristic determinists are simply that libertarians, unless they stray into irrelevance, have no quarrel with them and that indeterminists have nothing to offer except chaos. If a man’s volitions were uncaused the meaning according to voluntaristic determinists would be that these uncaused causes sprang up within the agent without any sort of connection intelligible or otherwise either with the man or with his character or with his knowledge or with his circumstances. On the contrary (they say) the mere fact that the volitions are the man’s shows that they belong to the causal system which is a human personality. There is no such thing as an uncaused volition, a volition dissociated from all relevant antecedents. If, *per impossibile*, there were such a volition it would be a causal vagrant upsetting not supporting moral responsibility. It would be freakish, incalculable, lonely and sporadic.

True, there are undependable persons who nevertheless are morally responsible for their inconstant conduct ; but (so the negative argument goes on) it is wholly unnecessary to believe that such weakness and inconstancy does not have its causes, and any theory which implied that no

<sup>1</sup> Jan. 1934, p. 9, n.

responsible moral agent could ever be dependable should be anathema to all moralists. The outraged comment, "Surely you know me too well to believe that I would ever have done such a thing", is sometimes justified. The comment, "It was lucky for you that there was a witness to prove your alibi", need not be offensive if it refers to the opinions of outsiders or to the rules which judge or jury have to follow in a trial but would be offensive, outside a thieves' kitchen, if the parties knew one another well. What is the meaning of saying that a man is staunch and dependable except that you can count on him? And how can you count on him unless he is the continuing cause of that on which you count? What is the training of character except the establishment of such a dependable causal system? If our volitions were uncaused, would there be the slightest reason to suppose that the man who had been notably truthful for twenty years would not lie fluently the very next moment? Indeterminism is just the theory that anything may pop up at any time. In the case of the truthful man the story of the indeterminists would be that the procession of truths which had issued from his mouth so uniformly for twenty years had no bearing at all upon what issued from his mouth at the next moment.

That in substance is the negative argument of voluntaristic determinists. Cause or chaos? Which will you have?

If cause or chaos were indeed the only alternatives, who would not be a cause-man, a determinist? Who, for that matter, would be disposed on evidence to favour the compromise of a little chaos and a lot of cause or any other proportion of the two? The empirical evidence of past human behaviour would not support him. Considering the complexity of the evidence and the difficulty of precise observation human behaviour has been pre-

dictable with very fair success. Bradshaw in the past has been a tolerably reliable prophet. Where he failed, he failed as often on account of unexpected defects in the engines as on account of undependable railwaymen ; and there are obvious though complex causes why engine-drivers should choose to run their trains up to time. In the past I have found my tobacconist much more dependable than the utility lighter he sold me, though the utility lighter is a much less complex continuant than the tobacconist.

In short, chaos would lose along the entire front of the battle, and with determinism an easy victor, voluntaristic determinism would have a very strong claim to credence. It would admit a very large measure of personal autonomy. It would admit the efficacy of choice, though not of uncaused choice. It is ready to construe moral choice after the pattern which, according to most moralists, is essential if morality is not a sham, that is to say to regard moral decision as a choice in which beliefs concerning the nature and consequences of a proposed action, together with beliefs concerning good and evil, right and wrong, both types of belief being amenable to logical evidence, are among the relevant causes and may be the chief among them. Chaos in these regions has always been unwelcome to moralists ; so that at least they should rejoice in its discomfiture.

Therefore an essential question is whether there are just the two alternatives, cause or chaos.

Here the discussion of the last lecture should help. Examining the maxim *Ex nihilo nihil* we saw that the maxim denied radical discontinuity but could not set bounds *a priori* to the type of degree of change or of "novelty" in any continuous series. To admit that complete discontinuity is an instance of chaos is not necessarily to admit that continuity and causation are identical. Causes are

antecedents in a *uniformity* of change, change being more than a uniformity of persistence. It is also permissive in principle of very startling differences or novelties in the consequent when compared with the antecedent. What cause-men have to show is that there is no continuity unless the continuing process is patterned through and through or, as some would say, "down to the last detail", by uniformities of change or of persistence. Unless this can be shown the repudiation of utter discontinuity is not, as such, the acceptance of determinism, and the alternatives "cause or chaos" are not exclusive. Even if cause-men could give a much more plausible account of continuity of any kind whatever than any one else, they would not, on that account alone, have driven all their opponents to admit that, in their opposition, they were backing simple chaos.

This comment, be it remembered, is based on the minimum assumptions a cause-man could make. At the very least a cause is a uniformity of change. If a cause be also something more, a logical entailment, say, or something which is efficacious in a way in which mere uniformities of change are not efficacious though (some think) many human actions are, or something which "necessitates" in some special sense of that far from innocuous term, the cause-men would have still more to prove. They would have to show that there would still be chaos if there were uniformities of change not causally determined in these additional senses of "cause".

Is all this heartening to anti-determinists?

Clearly it seems to be. Very few of them are chaos-men. Very few of them are prepared to deny continuity in human life and mind. If there is some middle way between chaos and determinism they are encouraged to start a counter-offensive.

The weapon on which they chiefly rely is the denuncia-

tion of predetermination *ad unum* described in the last lecture. Voluntaristic determinism, they say, while it may be capable of meeting many objections based on the plain facts of man's (relative) voluntary autonomy and on the proper solicitude of morality in this matter, in the end, though not at the first or at the second look, is wrecked on the same reef as fatalism. If everything in a self-determining being is predetermined *ad unum*, something whose coming-to-be in every possible respect is fixed in advance by what *was*, the same must be true of the choice itself. The efficacy of choice on which voluntaristic determinists insist so vigorously is irrelevant to that. By hypothesis all a man's decisions as well as their outcome is inevitable <sup>1</sup> and are not matters of choice. Choice, according to voluntaristic determinism, is at the best a courtesy title for what, on close examination, turns out not to be choice.

Having confessed, in the last lecture, that I was unable to perceive clearly whether this argument is a good argument, or a sophism based on loose assumptions regarding the apparently utter contrast between what is inevitable and what is optional, I have here to renew the humiliating confession. If anyone knows the answer he knows where he stands in this essential matter.

Some philosophers profess to know the answer on the evidence of their own personal experience. Discussing such statements as, "I could have refrained though I didn't", Mr. C. A. Campbell writes : "The agent in the experience we are analysing is certain that he 'could have decided to refrain' in its absolute or unconditional meaning. To show that this is so, we must employ again our old technique. We must ask ourselves 'Can we, while making the effort, conceive it as even possible that we could not have refrained from making it unless some factor or factors in the situation had been different?'

<sup>1</sup> I.e. if plurality of effects is denied.

For myself I feel that I cannot entertain this even as a possibility. Once the question is put to me, I find myself completely certain, while making the effort of will, that I could have decided to refrain from making it even if the situation had been different in no particular whatsoever".<sup>1</sup> On the next page, it is true, Mr. Campbell explains that subjective certainty, provided that it is complete, is sufficient for his argument in its context, and that, in some other context, a metaphysician might be entitled to maintain that the subjective assurance, however complete, was nevertheless mistaken. He says, however, that he would "vigorously dispute" that point too—if it arose. And it does for us.

When I make this introspective experiment I do not so much as approach Mr. Campbell's subjective certainty. Suppose, however, both that Mr. Campbell and many others have no doubts at all and that they are entitled to believe that their wills do not differ in nature from other people's wills. How could anyone's introspection by itself supply the evidence which, according to Mr. Campbell, *seems* conclusive. The "situation" which Mr. Campbell is examining in his confident introspection includes the agent, his desires and his character as well as his circumstances. Much in these is unknown to the agent. Of the known factors some are not known by introspection. How, then, could the agent have any right to assert that he knows for certain by introspection that, "had the situation been different in no particular whatsoever", he could have refrained when he did not refrain. If, though he doesn't *know*, he is just *sure*, what sort of assurance has he? His confidence is inferential. It is about the tenability or untenability of a hypothesis; but his self-observation, being observation, is not inference. He is professing to elicit from introspective observation what

<sup>1</sup> *Aristotelian Society Proceedings*, 1939-40, p. 68.

introspection cannot bear upon its face ; and the fact, if fact it be, that he entertains no doubts about the validity of his inference has little bearing upon anything. Unless all the conditions are known there can never be justifiable inference, let alone conclusive inference, to what is absolute and unconditional. Indeed, even if Mr. Campbell were justified (as he is not) in confining his argument to "particulars" observable by introspection, his assurance would still be shakily evidenced. With practice one's powers of self-observation may improve. One learns to discriminate what formerly one did not discriminate.

Here, therefore, as in so many other cases in which "freedom" is said to be manifestly attested by personal experience introspectively present for all to see, the stock answer suffices. You are describing what you infer, not what you observe ; and the inference is precarious. I am sorry to have used this stock argument so often, but if stock caps fit, there is no reasonable objection to drawing them from the same box, granting that the box contains no surprises.

Another introspective argument, not Mr. Campbell's though somewhat similar and rather widely sustained in a variety of forms, is to the general effect that determinism is a theory derived from external observation, that our inner experience attests our freedom, that external observation is superficial, that inner experience is profound, and so that determinists bamboozle themselves by framing a theory based on other people's behaviour and then, perversely neglecting their own personal experience, applying the theory to themselves.

There are many cases in which an argument of this general type is cogent. Indeed voluntaristic determinists make extensive use of it when they part company with other determinists ; for they include what they regard as a faithful introspective description of voluntary choice

among their data and consequently do not argue from external observation alone. To maintain, however, that inner experience, where it exists, very often supplements external observation, perhaps with a rich profusion of evidence, is very different indeed from maintaining that it *contradicts* external observation. If it did, one or the other would have to go ; and indeterminism contradicts determinism.

Is there anything invincibly *wrong* with external observation, anything which makes it suspect from the start and forever after ? Bergson and some other philosophers say so ; but we need not believe them, and most philosophers who use the argument make no such extravagant claims. What we know from the outside, they hold, is superficial but need not be false. If so, what becomes of the present dispute ? It cannot disturb voluntaristic determinists unless they have misread the introspective evidence ; for they are basing an essential part of their case upon introspective evidence. They are arguing from the inside as well as from the outside. If, however, and in so far as determinism is correctly based upon external knowledge, it is by hypothesis correct and therefore at war with indeterminism. If it proves the existence of the relevant uniformities of change, then there are these uniformities ; and indeterminists in denying them must be wrong.

Obviously there is much to be discussed in detail when arguments of this general type are applied to human action. The metaphors involved in extending the use of the terms "external" and "internal" beyond their literal spatial use have to be examined. (Indeed it is a disputed question whether a man's knowledge of another man's mind is altogether "external".) It would also appear that a man's knowledge of himself may be "external" in more than one intelligible sense. If this tangle

were tidied there would still be much to discuss about the nature and profundity of introspective self-observation ; and there are very good reasons for holding that, very often, a man may learn home truths, gratifying or ungratifying, about himself from his fellows, having failed to note them in his self-acquaintance.

These labyrinths, however, should not bewilder the general argument. Voluntaristic determinism is not based exclusively upon "external" evidence, and if determinism were securely based upon sufficient external evidence, nothing on earth could upset it though much might supplement it. To repeat : the favourite philosophical device of distinguishing between the inner and the outer aspect of things cannot be used legitimately unless the two aspects, however different, are consistent. Determinism and indeterminism are inconsistent.

Another argument may be introduced as follows : When voluntaristic determinists maintain that our volitions are efficacious and are also caused, they often proceed to describe the relevant causes, and many of them would say that the strongest antecedent desire is the cause or, like Hobbes, that after deliberation, the last desire is what moves the will. In reality, however, according to the new objectors, moral self-determination is of quite another order. Regarding desires it may be action "in the line of greatest resistance" and is so when we vanquish the Satan within us. Again, responsible moral choice is the choice of a man who, believing that he discerns what is right and good, chooses on that ground. Morality, according to this account of it, moves in a different orbit from the orbit of desire and determinists overlook the circumstance.

The general answer to this argument is surely quite clear. Hobbes and the others may have been sadly wrong in the description they gave of voluntary choice and

its causes, but their mistakes in this matter would debilitate voluntaristic determinism if and only if no other description of the facts were open to a consistent determinist. It is impossible to prove that human volitions are uncaused merely on the ground that some eminent determinist or other has assigned the wrong causes. What would have to be shown is that a morally responsible will is unintelligible unless it is outside the causal orbit altogether. To say that responsible moral choice is never the outcome of conscienceless desires but is actuated by belief in what is right and good is not to say it is uncaused. The statement is fully consistent with determinism. All that is proved, determinists say, is that a certain type of cause is requisite for *moral* choice, a type of cause which is not conscienceless.

Very little need be said about the alleged "action in the line of greatest resistance". The description commonly given is that the man who withstands some furious temptation takes sides against his desires, throwing his moral weight into the balance and dipping the pan on the side of conscience. Certainly a righteous man who is not an angel may have to struggle against all his lustful desires, against all his selfish desires, against all his ambitious desires. But has he to struggle against *all* his desires? Has he no desire to do the right? If "desire" be a general term defined to include all inclinations of any sort, all potentially actuating motives, it is as good as certain that he has such an inclination, such a motive. If, on the other hand, "desire" or "inclination" be defined in some narrower sense, the appropriate comment is that we are talking about the greatest resistance of *desires* and not about the greatest resistance of all the relevant causes.

A closer and apparently a more formidable argument in this field brings us back to a question discussed in the third

lecture. It is that the orbit of responsible moral choice is evidential and logical and that logic is cause-free since validity has to be judged by its own standards and by these standards only.

This view may appear to have empirical confirmation. To say that a man is in his right mind is to say, among other things, that he is able to judge upon evidence, to decide in terms of logical standards. And similarly when he gives his mind to questions of right and wrong. Deciding in terms of these standards, logical standards with which natural history has nothing to do in any logical way, he is able to give effect to the decisions if he be genuinely a responsible moral agent. But logic *per se*, validity *per se*, rightness *per se* are neither things nor historical events and so cannot act, cannot be causes. In other words the orbit of logical evidence is not causal at all ; and yet it is the orbit of responsible moral action.

The answer, I submit, is twofold. Firstly, the irrelevance of the natural history of any process of thought to its logical validity is no proof at all that thoughts do not have a natural history. On the contrary, they have such a history, and it cannot be proved to be a cause-free history simply on the ground that such and such an inference, say, is valid no matter what its causes may have been. Secondly, although validity *per se* is not an agent or a cause, belief in validity may very well be a cause. The belief that what he is about to do is right may very well be the principal part-cause of a righteous man's action. On this vital point libertarians and determinists may consistently agree. They differ on the question whether the belief in the right is an uncaused "first" cause or not ; and here we are back where we were. The belief has a natural history which may well be causal for the reasons given above.

I shall end this lecture by discussing yet another point.

The gist of my argument has been that, with one possible reservation, there is no opposition between voluntaristic determinism and personal moral responsibility even of the most austere and puritanical type. What is more, there are strong positive grounds favouring, undogmatically, a form of voluntaristic determinism in ethics. The possible reservation is based on the problem whether a voluntaristic determinism which implies predetermination *ad unum* does, in the end, make nonsense of choice. That problem is intricate and I have not discerned a solution.

The whole discussion, however, has assumed that the relative but highly significant autonomy of a morally responsible man, not uncaused but developing by predominantly immanent causality in the topmost and critical case of responsible, knowledgeable voluntary decision, refers to a man who has become a going concern. That, it may be complained, is just the difficulty. Very few people, and very few moralists object, in itself, to the attempt to show that a man's responsible conduct proceeds primarily from a chain of causes within himself. If the matter rested there they might be content. But, they say, the matter cannot rest there. The man did not make himself, did not cause his own birth. He himself, according to determinists, is a product, the product of causes that operated before he was born. Consequently (we may be told) the very argument upon which voluntaristic determinists lay so much strength recoils to smite them. The self-determination which voluntaristic determinists acclaim turns out, with very little trouble on their opponents' part, to be other-determination after all.

Mr. John Wisdom in his *Mind and Matter* expresses this view by saying that blame implies *ultimate* responsibility<sup>1</sup> and that no human being could significantly be blamed unless his pre-existence had been world-long.<sup>2</sup> The argu-

<sup>1</sup> P. 116.

<sup>2</sup> P. 130.

ment to pre-existence, he remarks, is unfashionable,<sup>1</sup> but the argument from the implications of blame is very fashionable. A plebiscite of his students showed a large majority in its favour.<sup>2</sup>

The results of Mr. Wisdom's plebiscite might have been more impressive had Mr. Wisdom warned the voters that the word "responsible" was ambiguous. There is a colloquial, journalistic sense of the word in which "being responsible for" means neither more nor less than "being the cause of". A drifting mine, we may read, was "responsible" for the disaster to such and such a trawler. What has to be shown is that, granting that a man is not ultimately the cause of his own existence, it follows that he is not truly and finally responsible, in the moral sense, for his willed moral conduct.

I shall attempt to show that the argument has no better basis than this manifest ambiguity.

Human beings sprang from ape-like ancestors presumably non-moral; and if these anthropoid primates were in some sense moral beings, they, in their turn sprang from beings which were not moral. And how could a non-moral being be *morally* responsible for anything?

That should be enough, but, for better measure, let us arbitrarily restrict the argument to the special case of parents and their children. Parents are the causes of their children's existence, and are morally responsible for the act of procreation. They know that what they are doing may result in the birth of a thinking, sorrowful, imperfect human being. Suppose their son, now a grown man, forges a cheque. Is there any difficulty, even remote, in admitting that he, not they, is the forger, that he, not they, is morally responsible for the forgery, although they, not he, had the moral responsibility for his birth? They do not so much as share the moral responsibility

<sup>1</sup> P. 130.

<sup>2</sup> P. 117.

for the forgery, whether or not they were alive at the time.

If they did "share" it, we could not assume that moral responsibility is "shared" in the exclusive sense in which sugar is rationed and, keeping to the case of the parents of a forger, our distinction would be between the remote and the proximate causes of the forgery. The parents would be the remote cause, their child the proximate cause. If, gratuitously and quite falsely, *no* distinction were drawn between "being morally responsible for" and "being the cause" of, it could hardly be contended, with any show of reason, that the proximate cause was not a cause and did not matter. Indeed, on the principle "*cessante causa cessat et effectur*", it might be argued that only the proximate cause mattered, most obviously if the parents were dead when their offspring misconducted himself. A more plausible argument might be that the proximate cause should be regarded as a continuation of the remoter causes, in which case, to say the least, the proximate cause could not matter *less* than the remoter causes. In any case, the idea that the parents' "responsibility" for their son's felony abolishes *his* "responsibility" is wholly untenable. By the same argument the son's "responsibility" is not even diminished on the given assumptions, a further proof, if proof were needed, that in whatever sense "responsibility" may be said to be "shared", its division into separate packets is a mistake.

In short, this particular argument is very ill-grounded; and that is just as well. Few libertarians would have the effrontery to maintain that human beings are not caused; and indeterminists, unless they deny that there are any causes anywhere, would be equally reluctant. Pre-existence "at least world-long" may indeed be a truth now gone out of fashion. But these are not its grounds.

## LECTURE VI

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### Theism and Human Freedom

**T**HEISM is one metaphysical theory among others. By a metaphysical theory I mean quite simply a theory whose professed and proper business is to deal with the ultimates of existence. By an ultimate, in its turn, I mean that beyond which there is no going, not merely that beyond which we are not prepared to go at any given time. Metaphysics really is *first* philosophy, if it exists.

For Aristotle theology and first philosophy were the same ; but it should be noted that the mere acknowledgement of the existence of a God or of many gods need not involve metaphysical theism. If, as often in the East, it is said that Ishvara is *only* a God, the Great Brahma being ultimate reality, if as for Proclus the gods are below the One, if the Demiurge, as so often is the case, is regarded as only a world carpenter and an underling, the doctrine, although not atheistic (since it has a place for God or the gods) is not theism proper. Its God although genuine is not ultimate. It is hypertheism, not theism. For theism proper God or the gods must really be the first and the last in all possible relevant senses.

Much has been called by the name of God. In the medical schools at Cos the "god" of a drug was its essential principle. Other Greeks called the Olympians "gods". There have been reputed tribal gods, local numina, *Sondergötter* and other "gods" whose status did not approach metaphysical ultimacy. It would be futile to examine the relations between *such* divinity and human freedom.

On the other hand it would be unprofessional conduct on my part to define theism so narrowly as to exclude by definition a great many serious metaphysical theisms in a great many parts of the world. I ought to attempt to examine the logic of theism, not of some special form of theism here or of some special form of theism there. My offence would not be venial if instead of discussing the relations between theism and human freedom I were in fact to discuss the relations between Christian theism (more probably some special form of that metaphysical theory) and human freedom. Through inadvertence it is easy to offend in this way—easy but not easily pardonable. I confess that my knowledge of theisms other than Christian is shockingly meagre. In comparison my acquaintance with certain types of Christian theism, though very inadequate, is almost considerable. All the same the topic of the present lecture should not be made intolerably narrow by definition or by assumption.

Accordingly I shall deal with such theisms as maintain that “God”, being ultimate, is at least the God of the universe, has distinctive unity even if more accurately described as a divine society, and has defensible claims to the worship and reverence of human beings. These statements, I allow, are not very precise, but I do not see how to better them without either, on the one hand, being frankly sub-metaphysical, or, on the other hand, covertly assuming what is indefensibly narrow.

Certainly, in describing theism as a “theory”, or, as I may have occasion to do, as a hypothesis, I include by implication much that would be excluded by those who profess to know that it is more than a theory or than a hypothesis. Those who say they *know* that God is their friend on evidence not wholly unlike the evidence of human friendship, who know in fact that they commune with deity, would repudiate the language of theory and

hypothesis in this matter ; and similarly those who assert that an essential part of their knowledge of deity is historical. One may have theories and hypotheses about one's friends or about the late Julius Cæsar ; but what we know of them is more than theory or speculation. If I knew these historical things about deity I should limit the discussion accordingly ; but I don't know them. All the same, if I knew them, or anything resembling them, I should still retain a speculative interest in the relation between other forms of theism and the human will, and would expect to find instruction in such enquiries, carefully pursued, even if I knew the said other forms of theism to be false or insufficient. It is often profitable to speculate on the implications of premisses which are less than one is entitled to assert. I hope therefore that the charge of idle futility does not lie, and desire no other concession in this matter.

However that may be, I shall begin with a discussion of pantheism, remarking parenthetically that pantheism seems to me to be one of the stronger not one of the weaker forms of theism, and to be treated very scurvily if regarded either as a weakness to be deplored or as a heresy to be crushed.

Pantheism affirms that God is all and that all is God. If this means that God is the whole it follows that the whole is God ; for there is simple conversion when both subject and predicate are singular terms. This is totalitarian pantheism. On the other hand distributive pantheism, the view that each several thing is divine in its intrinsic constitution, is not a logical consequence either of the doctrine that God is all or of every form of the doctrine that God is, somehow, "in" all,<sup>1</sup> touching each severally in such a way that each may be said to be full of him.

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. xv, 28.

According to distributive pantheism each several thing that exists is not merely somehow godlike but is also very God. There would, however, be no point in declaring that peas and pebbles were intrinsically divine unless the peas and the pebbles were much more than they seemed. More generally there is as good as no plausibility in distributive pantheism if the units of reality are what we take them to be, atoms and neutrons, cups and saucers, cabbages and sealing wax. Such units do not operate on a cosmic scale, and very few of them have the tiniest claim to reverence. On the most favourable supposition, only the whole society of them could be God and the several units would often resemble deity in the very feeblest way.

Consequently it would be idle to examine a distributive pantheism of *such* units. If, however, it were held that the ultimate units of reality, save perhaps some few, were very different indeed from what scientists or plain men take to be the units in Nature, and that *their* society was "God" we might well have a tenable theory. True, it would be the society of ultimate units which (probably) would be called God, not each several unit; but if God be conceived pluralistically and not monistically the attribution of godhead to each of the ultimate units might be justifiable and, in any case, the units would be primary and not derivative.

Among theories of this type the most familiar are those which assert that reality is composed of minds, not necessarily human or animal, each such mind having sensory ideas or representations which are mind-dependent in each case. The doctrine is that these minds working consiliently are what ultimate reality is and are all that it is. If reality is worthy of reverence, they severally might also be worthy of reverence. Each, in short, might well have divine quality.

Moreover the way in which they act in concert could

be consistently interpreted as the correspondence of each with each, and not as the result of mutual influence. To use Leibniz's illustration or Geulincx's they might agree as clocks agree when there is no master-clock. True when Leibniz spoke of the pre-established harmony of his monads he assumed that God synchronised the clocks in the beginning. It is also true that Leibniz was inconsistent if, denying the possibility of transient causality on logical grounds, he nevertheless admitted that God was a transient cause. Leibniz however was not a pantheist. He was a monarchical theist. Had he been a pantheist he would have maintained that the clocks were self-winding, that their harmony, though not pre-established, was everlasting pre-existent, and that the unity of reality quite simply *was* the correspondence of its self-determining ultimate units.

A neo-Leibnizian who argued so would not condemn himself to inconsistency in advance and would be entitled to a metaphysics of a certain type of freedom. The relevance of such a doctrine to the autonomy of finite agents is manifest. It asserts the autonomy of the ultimate reals in an absolute way far exceeding the measure of relative autonomy we should commonly ascribe to freemen. Hence if it could be shown that any man was one of the ultimate reals his autonomy would be metaphysically grounded. The trouble would be to prove that even the most godlike among men was such an ultimate real. As for indeterminism, the question would be whether the language of immanent causality commonly used for describing the theory was or was not justified; and, in particular, whether a continuity which fell short of determinism might not suffice.

Turning to totalitarian pantheism we have the immense advantage that Leibniz's senior contemporary Spinoza, a philosopher of genius whose work still lives abundantly,

devoted his *Ethics*, and most of his intellectual maturity, to showing what man's freedom was and what man's bondage when understood in their true perspective, in the vision of "Nature or God", that single, all-sufficient, all-inclusive Whole. Such good fortune should not be let slip.

Spinoza's general doctrine is that man's passions are his thraldom, his clear understanding, his freedom. He combines this doctrine with complete and rigorous determinism as well as with his pantheism, i.e. with the unqualified monism of the metaphysical assertion that there is just one substance "God or Nature, Nature or God". Negatively and polemically he attempts to destroy the whole rambling arsenal of vulgar and theological libertarianism. Final causes are superstitions, bred of ignorance. Chance is the negation of science.

Spinoza's positive argument is based upon his analysis of action and of passion. "We are said to *act*", he says (III. Def. ii), "when anything happens, inside us or outside us, whose adequate cause we are, that is, when anything either inside us or outside us follows from our own nature and can be clearly and distinctly understood from our own nature itself. On the other hand, we are said to suffer when anything, either inside us or outside us, comes about of which we are only the partial cause." Our action is our freedom and we are in bondage so far as we are coerced from outside. The conception of freedom is just the conception of autonomy.

Spinoza's account of our passions, in the sense of emotional perturbations, is, however, more complicated than this. A passion or "animi pathema" (III. Gen. Def.) is, like sensation, a *confused* idea defined not merely by the fact that it is part-caused from outside but also by the fact that we are ignorant of the circumstance or very largely so. "In sensation", he says (II, xxix Cor.), "a

man in the common order of nature does not know either himself or his body or outside bodies" with anything approaching adequacy. The confusion is essential to the *mental* "pathema", a point which could not be explained away even if Spinoza were given the benefit of his untenable view that falsity is "nothing positive in things".

In any case there is something positive in our sensations, something independent of our knowledge or ignorance of their causes. Nobody supposes that he is the sole cause of, let us say, his seeing of the redness of a penny stamp, and there is not the slightest reason for supposing that in proportion as he learns more about physical or physiological optics he will cease to see red, just as in the days of his ignorance, when he looks at the stamp. What then of our passions in the narrower sense that moralists discuss so often? What of being angry instead of seeing red? Spinoza sometimes says that man, being always a part of nature, must always be subject to passion (e.g. IV, ii). He will always, according to Spinoza, be coerced in some measure by things outside him. Apart from the language of coercion, that is a straightforward description of the fact that a finite being is not always the sole cause of what occurs in him. The fact would remain, however clearly the man understood it. In other places Spinoza affirms that a passion ceases when the ignorance in it is dispelled. "The affection which is a passion", he says (V. iii), "ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it."

Empirically while there is nothing to be said for the view that a man's sensations would cease if he understood their causes, there is much to support the opinion that there is a definite contrariety between, say, the passion of anger and a clear understanding of the situation which, half-understood, so often is said to rouse men's anger. The serenity of the life of reason which Spinoza describes

with such balance and sanity and in such moving terms appeals to nearly every reader and evokes deep admiration in all save a very few. Here his ethics is a perpetual treasure house ; and not the less so if the admiration is itself one of the finer human passions. But even a gracious light may bewitch as well as reveal. We have to examine Spinoza's grounds for his conclusions.

He says (V, vi) that there is no bodily affect of which we cannot form a clear and distinct idea ; but his proof is absurdly meagre. It is proof by reference to the doctrine of adequate ideas he expressed earlier (II, xxxviii, *et seqq.*) combined with an earlier proof (II, xii), that whatever happens in a man's body must have a parallel idea in his mind. Indeed his proof is simply that the common properties of everything, the properties which are "equally in the part and in the whole" must *be* in every man's body, and therefore, by the postulate of parallelism, must have their mind-aspect or idea. This should mean that if a man attends to those properties of his body which are common to it and to everything else, to the peas and the pebbles, say, of our earlier discourse, he will attend to what is undeniably *his* and will also know what each such common property is in himself. But how much of a man would these common properties compose ? What right has anyone to say that because he has them he is able either to know them or for that matter to suspect their presence ? The proof, in short, is a miserable failure, but instead of being a great man's lapse, it is based on leading principles in Spinoza's system repeatedly expounded at length. When Spinoza says elsewhere and indeed after the shortest possible break, the delay of a single proposition, that the mind controls its passions in proportion as it understands *everything* to be necessary (V, vi), he is offering a totally different explanation from this beggarly array of properties present equally in the

part and in the whole. He is talking the language of totalitarian pantheism and abandoning the distributive language of the common properties present in each several thing. But what has become of his proof?

Spinoza's positive account of human action as opposed to human passion, of human freedom as opposed to human bondage, is simply that clear understanding and action proper are literally identical. His proof (IV, xxvi) may seem to affirm something less since it is expressed, largely at least, in terms of the effort (*conatus*) to understand; but the identity of action and understanding is vital to it. Hence the doctrine has two parts, the first that a man's understanding proceeds from himself alone, so being genuinely autonomous, and the second that his understanding *is* his action. The first assertion seems to be a stranger within his pantheism. Why should he hold that a man's understanding comes from himself alone and not from God the Whole? The second assertion, crisply announced in his aphorism, "Will and intellect are one and the same" (II, xl ix, Cor.) is simply false.

This account of Spinoza's fundamental argument concerning human freedom, if it be not penetrating, is at least the result of long and close attention; for I love to study him. That he said these things is indisputable. If the doctrine of the common properties were true and were adequate, his conclusion would follow. Of the other things he says (whether or not consistently) none is capable of yielding a strict demonstration. I submit that the demonstration fails completely.

That is not surprising. Totalitarian pantheism is inconsistent with the complete autonomy of any finite being though not with the relative autonomy of such a being. A totalitarian pantheist if he holds like Spinoza and the greater Stoics that reason expresses the principle of the cohesion of the Whole may legitimately maintain that

human reason, though less comprehensive than the principle of cohesion in the universe, is identical with it in its nature. It may well be a spark in the universal fire which blinds but does not destroy. Similarly a totalitarian pantheist may like Spinoza search for empirical confirmation of the thesis that virtue is strength, that the rational virtue of a rational man is *his* strength and passion his weakness, that rational men tend to concerted not to divisive action ; and the like. Here Spinoza's greatness was at its peak. Yet again a rationalistic totalitarian pantheist may legitimately try to show that peace and felicity attend rational understanding, that reasoned acquiescence in the rational ways of things is in itself true beatitude. Nothing in all this, however, so much as approaches a proof of human autonomy proper ; and we have always to remember that if the life of reason with its serene and generous acquiescence in what flows from the attributes and essence of the Whole is man's supreme felicity, the wicked, deceitful and wretched lives of turbulent, irrational and rebellious men also flow, *ex hypothesi* with the same necessity, from the attributes and essence of the Whole.

So of autonomy. What of indeterminism ?

Spinoza—see any text-book—is classed as a determinist ; and he *was* a determinist in his own way. Since, however, he denied the reality of time and held that whatever was envisaged *sub specie temporis* was imagination, not matter of clear knowledge, he was not a causal determinist in the sense of cause with which we have been concerned in these lectures. *Sub specie aeternitatis*, in the timeless essence of things, he maintained (or would have maintained had he been wholly consistent) there can neither be uniformities of persistence nor uniformities of change. There would not literally be events at all ; and the proposition “ Every event is caused ” would have to

be radically reinterpreted. For Spinoza "*causa*" meant "*ratio*"; the "cause" was the "*because*" whose consequences proceeded from it with *geometrical* necessity.

Hence the relation of Spinoza's "determinism" to what nowadays is understood by that word is full of problems, and these problems may recur when we contemplate, not Spinoza's form of totalitarian pantheism in particular, but totalitarian pantheism in general. In so far as indeterminism asserts, in William James's phrase, that events are "loose and strung along" it is at odds with totalitarian pantheism. For if the Whole be not highly integrated it possesses neither godhead nor totality in a monist's sense of the latter. On the other hand the integration of the whole does not directly imply causal determinism in its current signification.

One of the reasons, though a minor reason, which induced me to begin this lecture with some remarks about pantheism in relation to human freedom was that there is a general belief to the effect that pantheism is allied with fatalism and in any case is an impersonal doctrine which, just because it is impersonal, evades or ignores the most serious moral problems which other types of theism have to face.

As we have seen, these opinions would not apply to distributive pantheism, but totalitarian pantheism undoubtedly tends to be an impersonal theism, the reason being that it is desperately hard if not utterly impossible to maintain that a society of selves, or a Whole which contains selves, is itself *a self*. It might well be a mental organisation but, to say the least, would be very unlikely to be *a mind*.

So let us turn to the consideration of the relation of impersonal types of theism to human freedom. Even for Christian Trinitarians this should not be altogether a barren theme. The sense in which the Father and the

Son are "persons" in the Godhead is vulgarly interpreted in far too human a way strongly resembling the heresy of Socinianism. The more cautious Christian doctors are well aware of this, allowing that they reject Sabellian interpretations of *πρόσωπον* or "persona". And if the three Persons in the Godhead are "persons" in anything approaching the usual sense of that word in common speech, it could not be lightly assumed that the Godhead is also a "person" in the same sense.

An impersonal theism need not be a fatalism. Let Moira be impersonal destiny not a feminine deity. Let her be identical with Zeus, similarly regarded as impersonal. Then we should have an impersonal sovereign destiny in the cosmos and if this impersonal cosmic destiny were patterned in righteousness, were Dike as well as destiny as in the Law of Nature of the Stoics, we should have a near approach to ethical monotheism. But not on account of the depersonification of Zeus, or Moira, or Clotho, or Lachesis or Atropos. All that would have happened would be that a different picture of Fate would have been drawn. Fate would be Fate either way. If Fate be denied it is denied both in its personal and in its impersonal forms. And if Fate be above Zeus, then Fate, not Zeus, is the God of the universe.

In many discussions, perhaps in most Western discussions, the rest of the argument appears to be that an impersonal cosmic righteousness, supposing it to exist despite the presence of the appearance of evil in the world (which is a problem for every form of theism), is ethically defective and, in particular, implies a kind of moral determinism which is a menace to human freedom and responsibility. The doctrine of Karma in the East is often supposed to show both the logic and the weakness of impersonal cosmic or hypercosmic righteousness at its clearest. Implacably, because metaphysically, guilt brings retribu-

tion to the guilty "as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage". The shortness of human life is not a way of escape. For each man there are reincarnations enough.

What is inherently wrong in such a doctrine as Karma so understood? True, we say that we have seen the wicked flourish, have seen them rich and healthy and decorated by a grateful country with very few signs of remorse on their part. Such empirical arguments, however, are wholly irrelevant when, by hypothesis, death is not the end. On that hypothesis the relevant difference is between expiating one's guilt in a series of reincarnations on earth and expiating it in unworldly places like Purgatory or Sheol. Again, the doctrine of Karma refers, not to public honours, or riches, or what we sometimes call the gifts of fortune but to inner expiation. Is there any moral deficiency in that part of it? Would not most moralists maintain, just as ardently as in the East, that personal expiation, not mere retributive suffering is the very marrow of divine justice?

Some theologians appear to think, like the late Dr. Oman, that the precision and inevitability of the retribution in the doctrine of Karma is its main moral defect and a very grave one. Its principle, they say, is mechanical like action and reaction in physics.<sup>1</sup> What warrant have they for saying so? Admittedly the simile of the ox and the wheel is agricultural if not entirely mechanical; but what of that? Is it then the *precision* of the law that is its moral defect? Human statute law may be always too general for a just decision in every particular case. Hence the need, perhaps, for courts of equity (until they too become rule-ridden) or for what in Scotland is called the *nobile officium* of the Court of Session. That, however, is a defect not a merit of statute law, and is not a consequence of its impersonality. If the judges in the exercise of their

<sup>1</sup> Oman, *The Natural and the Supernatural*, p. 221.

*nobile officium* correct the injustice of the written law they achieve a *nicer* precision of justice. True, these judges are men, are persons ; but that is irrelevant to a conception of Karma which entails that Karma has in itself the very nicety of precision which statute law does not have and courts of equity, deciding, as we say, "on the merits" attain very imperfectly.

Is it then the inevitability of the expiation that is supposed to be a grave moral defect and perhaps is confused with fatalism and with mechanism ? Surely our moralists do not deny that our actions, including our sinful actions, have consequences or that an anguished conscience may be just such a consequence. Even if an extreme indeterminist is logically entitled completely to disown his past, there are few moralists who would applaud this part of his doctrine. What the critics of Karma have to say, therefore, is that they object not, as such, to the doctrine that guilty men suffer in consequence of their guilt but to the doctrine that swiftly or tardily, they always do so. I am unable to see that such a contention is morally defective in any way at all. It does not impair moral responsibility which is entirely consistent with the view that a man is responsible for the inevitable consequences of his actions. It would not deny the guilty man's autonomy even on the extreme interpretation that the sinner, when he sinned, was a "first cause". For a first cause has effects (and why not inevitable effects ?) once it has operated. Most believers in Karma do not, it is true, believe in personal autonomy ; but that is another part of their philosophy, logically distinct from their assertion of the inevitability of the inner expiation that awaits sinful action.

Let us turn next to the type of theism which, being neither pantheistic nor impersonal, is much more familiar in contemporary Europe.

In such a theism the most acute among the difficulties concerning human freedom result from the conjunction of the attributes of omnipotence and omniscience in a deity who is wholly righteous. That is the form of the problem I shall now attempt to examine.

Were I a Doctor of Divinity I might perhaps, like Dr. Tennant,<sup>1</sup> say that these attributes belong to "the more pretentious *a priori* theology" without angering other Doctors or disquieting the minds of the faithful. Certainly I hope that sound doctors and good Christians are not required to accept a ferociously literal interpretation of these attributes. But if they are prepared to qualify and in part to renounce them, one would like to know in what respect they qualify them and what part of them they renounce. Failing that, it is at least legitimate to believe that hard cases make the best law, that doctrines pushed to their extremes give the best evidence of the logic implicit in them. This indeed is one of the greatest services of old-fashioned Christian dogmatics. Dogmatic Christian theism has not merely attempted to define with a rigour at least comparable to the rigour of old-world metaphysics, but has also, unlike so many philosophies old and new, attempted to deduce the consequences down to very minute details and to examine, with or without explicit challenge or explicit request, every feature of human life that might seem to block its path. In an eminent degree it has been patient and tenacious as well as courageous in its convictions.

As I have said, the chief among the problems that concern us here spring from the conjunction of these two attributes in God. We should, however, be most likely to be repaid if, in the first instance, we examine each attribute separately, partly, of course, because we should not expect to understand their conjunction if we are hazy

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophical Theology*, II, p. 122.

about what is conjoined, but partly also because the examination of each separately may evince what itself is relevant to our problem.

Take first the attribute of omniscience.

God's omniscience is generally understood to mean that God knows everything, including the infinite future ; and it is plain that if all coming events were fixed and determinate in advance of their occurrence, an omniscient being would know them all irrespective of the time at which he knew them. If on the other hand what we call future events were not fixed and determinate before they came into existence they would, ultimately and metaphysically, be unknowable before they came into existence. There cannot be knowledge where there is nothing to know, either for an omniscient being or for a being very far from omniscient. On this metaphysical view of the ultimacy of process in existence itself, what we call the future would *be* nothing at all before it came into existence. *Ex hypothesi* God the Omniscient would not foreknow either his own future or any future—not his own (for he also would be in process) and not any other (for the same reason).

I am concerned now, not with the truth still less with the orthodoxy of this piece of metaphysics, but with its implications only. If, however, an objector should hold that it should be dismissed from consideration on the ground that it contradicts theism, I should reply that I cannot see why it should contradict theism. It contradicts such theisms as maintain either that God is timeless or super-temporal in the sense that, containing succession within himself in some subordinate and inexplicable way he nevertheless “transcends” succession, persistence, time and change. Such assertions, however, are easier to make than to render intelligible, and it may be pardonable to conjecture that what is essential to serious theism

is not God's timelessness but his constancy, which latter notion is entirely consistent with the view that existence is always and ultimately process. On the other hand many would hold that the acceptance of the ultimacy of time need not imply the truth of this particular account of the nature of temporal process and it is evident that if the future constancy of God and of his universe were, for omniscience as well as for us, guesswork based on a venture of faith, i.e. on the assumption that the future would resemble the past, the conception of a cause as a pre-determinant and also the conception of what we call future *consequences* would have to be radically revised. Similarly, *any* being's moral responsibility for the future consequences of his actions would, as in man's case, be futurity-conjecture not *foreknowledge*.

Suppose then that, for argument's sake at least, we abandon this theory of a growing God in a growing universe and, instead take the view that the statement "what will be, will be just what it will be" shows no relevant differences from the statement "what is, is just what it is". If so the statement "The year 1815 — the year of the battle of Waterloo" would be timelessly true, true irrespective of the date of assertion. Therefore (although no human being then knew or guessed it) the statement would have been true in 31 B.C. the date of the battle of Actium; and the statement "The year 1999 — the year of a total eclipse of the sun visible in Cornwall", if true, would be true *now*.

In other words there would always *be* these things to know at any time, and an omniscient being would know them whether himself temporal or super-temporal or timeless. Being knowable in advance they could, of course, be predicted, but it is important to notice that the possibility of prediction does not necessarily imply determinism. Prophets and clairvoyants profess to be able to

predict, not by causal pre-inference but in a non-inferential way sometimes described as direct vision of the future. They may be mistaken, but not because their claim is nonsensical in itself. What they claim to possess is a non-inferential vision of the future similar in most relevant ways to the ordinary man's quite ordinary knowledge of his past in memory. We *may* infer the remote past from the near-past and the present by causal retro-inference in precisely the same way as astronomers infer a future eclipse by causal pre-inference from past and present data. These same astronomers do infer past unrecorded eclipses just as they infer future ones. But that is not *memory* which, in some sense, is non-inferential hindsight. And indeterminists may consistently admit the reality of memory, trusting it neither more nor less implicitly than others do. Had past events been uncaused they might still be remembered ; for they were what they were. Some Kantians and some others may affirm that accurate *dating* in the past is impossible without assuming dominant uniformities of persistence and of change, i.e. without assuming determinism ; but even if they are right on this special point they assume the authenticity of memory in all their theories concerning accurate dating and measurement of time.

I selected the example of the Cornish eclipse in 1999 because that future event is causally pre-inferred by astronomers to-day and so is predicted on deterministic grounds. Eddington even declared that "the shadow of the moon in Cornwall in 1999 is already in the world of inference" <sup>1</sup>—a senseless speech since there is no such thing as existence "in the world of inference". What I am now pointing out is that *such* foreknowledge and prediction is not the only possible type of foreknowledge and

<sup>1</sup> Aristotelian Society Supplementary Vol. *Determinism, Formalism and Value*, p. 168.

prediction and that other types are consistent with indeterminism. Therefore God's omnipresent foreknowledge is also consistent with indeterminism.

Take next the attribute of omnipotence.

Here the main question is whether "omnipotence" does or does not mean "omnificence".

In much vulgar theology, God's omnipotence is construed as meaning that although he *could* do anything he may also refrain from many actions well within his power, much as a Londoner who *could* take a train to Cambridge may prefer to visit St. Paul's. The conception is just the conception of a being with absolutely unlimited powers which he exercises or forbears to exercise at his mere good pleasure. Whether acceptable or not the idea is quite clear, and is not seriously incommoded by arguments designed to show that "unlimited" power must be interpreted in a way that makes sense, forbidding us for instance from holding that God could undo the past.

The idea of omnificence is also quite clear—and quite clearly different. An omnificent being is a being who does all that *is* done, the only agent that there is. In philosophy he is the God of the occasionalists, that is to say the God of full, not merely of partial, occasionalism. Partial occasionalism is a doctrine confined to the puzzles of body and mind. In its theory of human volition it affirms that when, as we say, we will to snap our fingers and they snap, what happens is that God, on the occasion of our willing, snaps our fingers for us. Full occasionalism affirms that the same must be said of everything which can be called an action in any intelligible sense. When a gale as we say uproots an oak what happens is that omnificent God uproots the oak on the occasion of the gale ; and similarly the gale itself.

Pantheism being rejected, it is clear that divine omnificence leaves no place for human autonomy of any sort.

It expressly excludes all power except God's. Again, since God the First Cause is conceived as "acting" by producing effects, there is no place at all for cause-free human life. God's action would not be other-caused and the sense in which his self-determination was or was not a process of immanent *causality* might be disputable; but that has nothing to do with the utter impotence of all his creatures.

So if God be omnificent our question is settled. There is room for argument only if he is omnipotent but not omnificent.

Let us now proceed to the implication for human freedom of the conjunction of omnipotence with omniscience in God.

An ethical monotheism which maintains that God is omnipotent and foresees all the future together with the outcome of every possible action, cannot consistently avoid the conclusion that its God is morally responsible for the righteousness and unrighteousness of the actions of all his moral creatures. In terms of the doctrine of creation, which is just the most emphatic way of describing God's unlimited power, we have to say that, morally responsible for creating Messalina, God is also morally responsible for her adulteries, since he knows that she will become an adulteress and is able, if he chooses, to control all that she does. On these assumptions it is useless to distinguish between proximate and remote causality. One might as well argue that an airman who releases his bomb at two thousand feet is morally responsible only for what happens at two thousand feet and not for what happens in a few seconds to the city below. Again, to argue that the deity may have turned a blind eye upon Messalina and her doings no more absolves the deity from moral responsibility than any other piece of voluntary negligence absolves. The case, in short, is quite different

from that of human parents and their children discussed in the last lecture. It was there shown that although parents are morally responsible for bringing their child into existence they are not, on that account alone, morally responsible for the child's heroic deeds or for the child's crimes. If the child steals or murders they need not have foreknown the crime, and the theft or the murder need not have been their decision or under their control. Hence the essential difference in the two cases.

In saying these things I am only drawing the proper logical consequence from the combination of omnipotence with omniscience in the God of ethical monotheism. There is no substantial difference between what I have said and the general assertion that an omnipotent and omniscient moral creator of the universe, having created and being in continuous control of a sinful if redemptible world, is morally responsible for *all* his work. Given the premises this general assertion is surely indisputable. I do not say that it makes the "problem of evil" insoluble or is a proof that divine righteousness can be defended only at the expense of limiting divine power. That may or may not be true. It is beyond the ambit of our present question.

What, very definitely, is within that ambit is the problem whether God's moral responsibility for human action, an undeniable inference from the conjunction of his omniscience with his omnipotence, has any logical tendency to diminish or to destroy the moral responsibility of human agents.

Let the point be repeated. If God, that omniscient and omnipotent moral being, pre-determines every human action, he is morally responsible for all that he pre-determines. Granting this, we now enquire whether such pre-determination, such pre-destination affects or in the extreme case annuls the moral responsibility of human beings.

This question, in its turn, is precisely the question debated in the last lecture. It is just the question whether the personal moral responsibility of men and women is or is not consistent with determinism. Unless it can be shown that divine predestination, that particular form of determinism, differs from general determinism in such a way as logically to affect the argument in its widest form there is nothing to discuss that was not already the subject of discussion.

The argument in the last lecture was quite general. It was about being pre-determined, not about being pre-determined by such and such causes in such and such a way, unless, indeed, the said causes were described, or mis-described, in such a fashion as *de facto* to deny the efficacy of human volition. The conclusion was that unless pre-determination *ad unum* makes nonsense of human choice there is no inconsistency between voluntaristic determinism and the fullest moral responsibility of human agents. That holds for the theistic pre-determination of human action, just as it holds for any other pre-determination which does not palpably distort the facts. There is no separate problem to be investigated.

THE END













